

HUSBAND

BY JOHN CORBIN

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HUSBAND
and
THE FORBIDDEN GUESTS

HUSBAND *and* THE FORBIDDEN GUESTS

Two Plays

BY

JOHN CORBIN

AUTHOR OF "THE CAVE MAN," "THE FIRST
LOVES OF PERILLA," "AN AMERICAN
AT OXFORD," ETC.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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WIFE

A PREFACE

1897

1898



WIFE

A PREFACE

WHEN a very wise play-broker read the comedy which is published in the following pages, she paid it the compliments due to the occasion and then exclaimed: "BUT—where shall we ever find a manager daring enough to produce a play on such a theme?" The fact which would put managerial daring to rout was that, as the play-broker assumed, the theme was obnoxious to women. Not that it was immoral, or in any way improperly suggestive. That would have been a minor obstacle, as is well known to all observers of the modern feminine mood. The heavily capitalized "but" referred to the fact—or rather to the broker's assumption—that the play presents the American woman in an unfavorable light. "It may be real," she added; "but it is not what the managers and the public want to *think* is real. You see, the wave of popularity is on the constructive and optimistic side."

If the theme of the play were quite what the

broker assumed, the conclusion is too obvious to be called wisdom. It is axiomatic. Not only in drama, but in all of the arts, the final arbiter in the American world is woman. And for some reason — a brave man once said it is because of a defective sense of humor and an imperfectly detached intelligence — women do not enjoy contemplating themselves in an unfavorable light. To ask them to do so, even for the brief space of a dramatic representation, is to them cruelly destructive, brutally pessimistic.

The comedy in question, as it happened, belied the broker's prediction. The first manager who read it agreed on the spot to produce it; and the first actress to make the acquaintance of Clorinda Wayne paid an advance for the right to impersonate her — a percentage of which, to my sorrow, fell to the play-broker. But after all, an axiom is an axiom.

The first man of the theatre to enunciate this one was Bottom the Weaver. And I have double cause to hearken to him now, for both of the plays I am publishing present the American woman in a light different from that which she herself would perhaps have chosen. Let me not fright the ladies

out of their wits ! I will roar them as gently as any sucking dove ; I will roar them, an 't were any nightingale. I have even aggravated the titles of the plays, so that, if nobody tells on me, the first will seem to be about American men, and the second about American children.

And I am not insensible, I hope, of the just claims of our wives and sisters. The ideal of my adolescence took form from the Gibson girl, so chastely sculpturesque, even though a little out of drawing. My young man's fancy kindled to the flush radiance of the heroines of Mr. Harrison Fisher, limned in all the effulgence of the color printing-press. And these were only the outward and visible signs. It was a new ideal that we all worshiped — a rare spiritual light until then undreamed of. Inwardly as outwardly, the American girl was the paragon of the nations. As boys we had had no such illusion ; vague fears mingled with our misty loves, contempt with our adoration. But as young men we saw a new light. Male and female were no longer the dearest foes. In every atom of body and soul they were one. The duel of the sexes was obsolete ; the union of the future was a comradeship.

Even more fervently than we, young women have followed this new light. There is no mannish activity to which they have not aspired — or condescended. As the modern athletic movement has brought us sport after sport, they have gone in for each with an ardor that fell short of no detail in the appropriate costume. Yet they have not been able to raise us men to an enduring basis of comradeship in athletics. It would be hard to tell the reason; but the melancholy fact is that as sport after sport has swept over the land, each in subsiding has left its women-adherents for the most part on the club veranda, taking tea in furbelows and despair, while the men are out in the open, crudely sweating and rejoicing in abandoned disarray.

Then women learned to talk of the stock market or the wheat-pit, of national politics and of magazine exposures, and with a brilliancy amazingly unhampered by a very natural lack of information. Sad to relate, the man seldom responds in kind. Heaven knows how our society manages to be even as intellectual as it is! His obtuseness is generally laid to the fact that he is the tired business man. He is. But if he tells the truth as to his

social lassitude — and why should he? — it is n't his business that makes him tired.

His failure to rise to the high estate of comradeship has left our women-folk in a position of tragic isolation. They are far beyond the humble consolations of the "three C's," which the Kaiser of late recommended as a salve to the feminine Zeitgeist — church, cooking, and children. They even pulled a wry face when a recent President commended one of this outmoded trinity. The American woman is in the position of a goddess who has been raised to a pedestal and then deserted by those who have raised her. It is impossible not to look down upon the world; yet what satisfaction is there in looking down, if the world goes on about its business unheeding? In "Man and Superman" the Statue of the Commander, having come off his pedestal, walks lightly and with a graceful sense of relief among quite common mortals; but the Commander was a man, and Mr. Shaw has a sense of humor.

We have been speaking of the American woman as we all delight to conceive her — of the woman of education and leisure; but in wage-earning also — as mill-hands, shop-girls, and typewriters —

women have, so to speak, claimed comradeship. These women are on the whole quite as beautiful, and dress in quite the same styles—though their charms are unblazoned on magazine covers. They are even more independent, for they largely feed and clothe themselves; and they have precisely the same attitude of equality with their commoner men-folk—of equality tinged with a tragic superiority.

Statistics tell of their vast and increasing numbers, and the national mind is much troubled on their account. But statistics add a fact which has received far less attention: the average age of wage-earning women is only twenty-two. Of middle-aged women there are thousands, but of girls, even children, there are tens of thousands. No doubt industrial women are a permanent phenomenon, and an increasing phenomenon—though not, as Dr. Edith Abbott has discovered, increasing relatively to men. But as individual wage-earners they are transients merely.

This is due in part, perhaps, to the well-established fact that as a rule they have less productive ability. Yet this is not always so. In occupations requiring neatness, accuracy, and skill they are

often superior. Nor are they transients because men brutally drive them forth. Men have seldom or never forced women to take less pay *for the same work*; for, as Mr. Sidney Webb has pointed out, the entire history of industry shows only a few rare cases in which men and women have done precisely similar work in the same place and at the same epoch. Where the sexes clash, women drive out men. Men simply cannot stand the competition.

For in some respects men are feeble to a point which it is not easy to discriminate from imbecility. Hard as it is in the struggle of life for any one to take care of himself, they are always casting about for the privilege (as it seems to them) of paying the bills of some one else — curiously enough, almost always a woman. And before a poor devil has become well inured to his new responsibility, he rubs his eyes to find that there are other mouths to feed, other backs to clothe. Yet this extraordinary dupe goes ahead and does it, uncomplaining. More than that! life is not worth living to him unless he can afford to act in this manner. Women, with their superior intelligence, are quite satisfied to work only for themselves. They have, in fact,

an extraordinary capacity for making others work for them. Under a competitive system, however, this enlightened policy has one drawback. Such is the insanity of men, that to take care of others they will work harder and better than women will work for themselves. And that is the great reason — perhaps the only reason — why women are paid less than men. Their own dispositions limit them to kinds of work that are worth less. In the industrial duel of the sexes they have mastered many fields — but each field shrinks as they master it.

It is not this, however, which makes women transients in wage-earning. A prominent merchant once put the case very tersely. He had long employed women as responsible stenographers and secretaries, but had lately begun filling their places with men, though at greatly increased salaries. One reason for doing so, he said, was that women are less stable physically, and that when their disability occurs in a crisis of rush work the result is disastrous—as disastrous to the welfare of the woman as to that of the business. His second reason was perhaps more momentous. He had found, he said, that he could not count on women permanently. To train them up to a responsible post

required several years; and it usually happened that, as soon as they had mastered it, they fell ill or retired to private life.

Thus in business as elsewhere women have failed to make good the claim of equality. They backslide in one of three ways — premature death, somewhat belated marriage, or the eternal streets. The difference of sex asserts itself and upsets the advanced, the enlightened order.

Even in the matter of actual numbers we have perhaps exaggerated the importance of women in industry. It is highly probable that in the economic life of the world as a whole they are a less important factor than in any preceding age. I am aware that to the feminist mind this will seem a false statement, or at best an untenable paradox; but let us look at the recognized facts.¹

It was the invention of machinery that brought women into the ranks of wage-earners. In the preceding age, and for thousands of years before it, back to the beginnings of civilization, most

¹ The following paragraph was written before the publication of Dr. Edith Abbott's *Women in Industry*, which, however, substantiates every statement in it.

industries were household industries — they were, in fact, the invention of the aboriginal mistress of the household. Women baked and brewed, spun, wove, sewed, and mended ; they brought up large families with their own hands, formed the manners of their children, and informed their minds. Machinery — the factory and the railway — changed all this. By cheapening commodities, it put an end forever to almost all of the household industries. At the same time it created the female wage-earner. Thrown out of work at home, rendered idle and no longer self-supporting, women of necessity flocked to the shop and the factory. But as machinery cheapened commodities it lessened the labor, and the number of laborers, necessary to their production. And even of this labor much is performed by men. Thus, speaking roughly, in proportion as the number of women wage-earners has increased, the importance of women in the sum total of human industry has diminished.

I have no wish to minimize the wrongs of the working-woman. As individuals they are still subject to much injustice. What is more, as potential mothers of a new generation the prevailing system

often treats them brutally, suicidally. And I do not, I think, undervalue the recent womanly advance in any respect. The athletic woman and the woman who concerns herself with public affairs, either as a reader of magazines or as an actual worker, is a clear improvement upon the woman of old whose activity and intelligence were limited to the household. Yet I think it fairly demonstrable that we have all been inclined to misconceive the present woman-problem. The one great disease of modern life is not the woman in industry ; it is the idle woman.

Until the present era, only the aristocratic few stood outside the workaday world. To-day, throughout what is sometimes called the middle classes, women have no real work. Their meals are cooked for them, their clothing made for them. In cases of sickness they employ a trained nurse. Often they have tutors and governesses for their children, and afterward they send their boys and girls away from home to school. What has happened is what always happens when any human being or any class loses touch with the vital affairs of life : superficially more vivacious, more charming, more varied than ever before, our women

have become, in all the essentials of character, futile, shallow, and vain.

It is, to be sure, only industrially — as productive units — that modern women are idle. If the mere doing of things is labor, heaven knows they have work enough! As if aware of the unnatural emptiness of their lives, they are casting about for something to occupy them in a thousand directions.

For some subtle reason that something, as a rule, has hitherto belonged only to men. Is it possible that the paragon of the nations in her heart of hearts respects nothing so much as her humble consort? Certainly we have received the flattery of imitation. There have been women lawyers, doctors, and priests; women painters and sculptors. Mentally these women have no doubt been the equals of men — at least, as Professor Angell has shown, they respond as favorably to the laboratory tests of physiological psychology. Yet after a generation of eager striving, the only field in which women have really shone is the field in which they have always shone, because it gives scope to the emotional and social qualities of their sex — the novel of manners.

The failure cannot be laid to mere male prejudice. Women themselves do not employ women lawyers and doctors. And though women are the chief patrons of the arts, they do not differ from men in their judgments as to their sisters who are artists.

The idea still persists, however, and is apparently gaining ground, that the sexes are, or should be, alike in activity and function. An orator addressing a Chicago woman's club lately proposed that, as we have mothers' clubs and mothers' magazines, we should have also fathers' clubs and fathers' magazines. The idea commends itself to the meanest intelligence. Sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander.

An idea which is essentially the same has commended itself to intelligences which are far from mean. Whatever is goose-like in the feminine mind—or shall we say gallinaceous?—is explained by an appeal to history as resulting from the brutal suppression which, it is alleged, women have always suffered at the hands of the muscularly superior sex. Thus it will take time for woman to recover her pristine equality. One of the cleverest of the advancing women has written

a poem to point the way back to nature. It begins thus:—

The female fox she is a fox,
The female horse a horse.

The rest of the poem escapes my memory; but the sense is that the female fox is as crafty as Reynard, the female horse even swifter than Bucephalus. Maud S. and Nancy Hanks are the heroines this poet sings. And woman, when she comes into her own, will be a superior female man.

Such reasoning, to say the least, is not universally true to human experience. Hercules had his Omphale, Samson his Delilah; and the merely industrial male, as we have seen, has not greatly profited by their example. If man has crushed woman down, which I am far from admitting, it is manifest that he has also idealized her, exalted her. Through the darkest of dark ages the one shrine of human adoration held a woman. Our poet's reasoning in fact is only speciously scientific. It leaves quite out of account the one science in which all questions of sex have their origin—biology.

And here we shall have to plod in the lowly path of platitude. Sex is an evolution. In the earli-

est forms of life it did not exist ; and as life has ascended, the difference between the sexes has become more and more pronounced. Now a chief means in the ascent of life everywhere is specialization. The functions of the primitive medicine man are to-day divided between the priest and the doctor, each of whom further specializes as preacher or social worker, as physician or surgeon, as oculist, aurist, dentist. The patriarchal household has expanded by specialization into our incomparably complex social and economic order. In biology the process has been the same. All the complex organs of the human anatomy developed by specialization from a single cell. In a precisely similar manner sex also is a specialization. In the unstable life of the lower animals, exposed on all sides to danger of annihilation, the female has to be as cunning and as swift as the male, who is quite powerless to protect her or her young. But in human society the male has achieved the function of providing and protecting, while the female has achieved a specialized capacity for motherhood which, at its best, is unapproached in all animate life. Sex equality is unknown to nature : it is against nature. Messrs. Geddes and Thompson,

in their work on the Evolution of Sex, remark in an impatient footnote that what was foreordained among the protozoans cannot be changed by act of Parliament.

I once had the honor of repeating this sentence to a distinguished English woman disseminating new thoughts among us. The idea that women should be like men, she retorted, was quite out of date. She and her militant allies would never think of wearing pot hats, choker collars, and trousers! "When I was put in jail," she concluded, "I wore a *crêpe de chine* frock of the latest mode, and" — with a gesture about her head which the limited masculine intelligence could never translate — "a hat that went so, and so." And thus was the doctrine of feminine equality reconciled with biology.

The ideas of the modern woman, like her activities, result not so much from an advance in thought as from a change in industrial conditions. Having little or no functional part in the world as it is now constituted, she has, obeying a very human instinct, produced from her inner consciousness a new order which is to give her a place of recognized importance. But even as this new order flies

in the face of evolution, it is at war with her deepest and most permanent impulses.

Never before, I submit, has there been a more interesting subject for dramatic representation. And it has quite eluded the dramatist. In the light of it the women of Ibsen seem already to belong to a past generation.

The ideals against which they revolted were essentially those of the era of household industries; for, as so often happens, they had long survived the conditions that gave rise to them. In the old age, "woman's work was never done," and the place for her body and her mind was not unnaturally held to be the place where her work was. To attempt an individual life outside the home was, and not without reason, held to be unjustifiable—"unwomanly" if not positively immoral. When women married they had a home and children of their own; if they did not marry, they became literally "spinsters" in the industrial households of others. But as soon as the home ceased to afford wives or spinsters their normal activities and importance, it became a doll's house: to limit their lives to its four walls was the height of tyranny. The situation was of a kind to appeal strongly to

Ibsen; and so we have Nora and the revolted woman in general.

I do not mean that Ibsen had thought out the situation in the terms of economic history, or of biology; indeed, we know that he had not done so. He had the keenest of eyes for character in dramatic situations; but his thought was limited to the terms of the drama of the individual. His mind worked not by causation, analysis, construction, but by broad comparisons and contrasts. In "An Enemy of the People" he portrayed the ideal of manly heroism; and then in "The Wild Duck" he gave us its travesty. When he had given us Nora, who abandoned home, husband, and children in the heroic will to realize her true womanhood, he felt that not all womanly revolt is justifiable; and in this new mood he gave us Hedda Gabler, whose feminine ambitions turned everything they touched to the sordid and the mean. But whether positive or negative, Ibsen's characters are unrelated to the social order. Nora's children bound her as little to her home or to the destiny of the race as Hedda's unborn child.

Ibsen had, in short, no mind for abstract ideas or for systems. He had no interest in "philosophy

as such"; and he expressed his contempt for economic thought with characteristic brusqueness. He remarked that he was quite able to believe John Stuart Mill when he said that he "got all his ideas from his wife." The vast new revelations of biology had no deep meaning for him; and in the progress of human history — so sure and majestic, if often slow and halting — he saw only "a gigantic shipwreck," with not enough lumber left from it all to make a state worth living in. "The State crushes Individuality," he cried; "away with the State!"

It is not strange that he failed to enlighten us as to the ultimate fate of the revolted woman, of her coming relationship to social and economic development. But since he failed to do so, his Nora already "dates"; she is as clearly mid-Victorian as black walnut and haircloth.

To-day the world is full of outmoded Noras, still seeking, absurdly, heroically, pathetically, the "miracle" which shall restore them to their birth-right of an economic status and a vital function. And Hedda Gablers are not unknown. The great, the insistent question of the time is what on earth to do with such women. When the world is ridden

by a dead ideal it needs heroic individuals to set it free; but such freedom is sheer anarchy unless it leads to a new ideal—an ideal which coördinates the welfare of the individual with the welfare of the community as an organized whole. As the work of Ibsen's generation was dark and destructive, ours is — *pace* my play-broker — constructive.

Along certain lines the way is clear enough, and is already well-trodden. Social life, which now spreads far out beyond the portals of the home, is very generally, though perhaps not very rapidly, advancing in refinement and intelligence. The popular arts are, as my play-broker so clearly recognizes, still largely dominated by the ancient feminine vanity and sentimentality; yet personally I feel optimistic—as well as constructive. If ever I should be moved to portray women with the pen of satire, I should do so, in the firm belief that they have achieved a sense of humor and a detached intelligence. The gallinaceous club woman is obsolescent and may some day be extinct, like the dodo. In well-managed clubs and civic organizations women are exerting a very powerful influence on the social order. All this work is productive, though remotely and indirectly so.

In one field the labor of women is immediately and directly productive. It is a field in which they are forever the only laborers; and it is the most vital, most significant field of all. Here, alas! it can hardly be said that they are advancing. "There is no wealth but life," wrote Ruskin; and the doctrine, neglected in his own time, has lately been taken as entitling him to rank as the founder of the only real and vital economics. "A nation," says Tille, "is composed not of property or of provinces, but of men." "The culture of the racial life," says Saleeby, "is the vital industry of any people"; and he advocates it as the basis of the patriotism of the future, whether socialistic or individualistic, peaceful or imperial.

How women are performing this, their exclusive industrial function, is well known. In France population as a whole is declining in numbers; in England, America, and Germany the rate of advance is becoming rapidly less. Among the well-born and well-bred everywhere — the aristocracy of biology — it is stationary or actually receding. Cut off by the industrial revolution from one form of their ancient productivity, women are cutting themselves off from the other in obedience to their

own idle selfishness, or at best their ignorant and false ideals.

The theory upon which all these ideals ultimately rest is that sex is "an accident," and as such a let and hindrance to the life of the individual. Down with all the old ideals of motherhood! Mr. Bernard Shaw, in whom the vital if incomplete thought of Ibsen has fallen into a late Victorian decadence, and so itself already "dates," blandly proposes that children shall be rapt from their mothers and fathers at birth and turned over to the incubator of a socialistic state. "What we need is freedom for people who have never seen each other before, and never intend to see one another again, to produce children under certain definite public conditions without loss of honor." The fatherland is to become also the motherland — or rather an asexual institution which shall perform the dual function.

Of all the functions which the state performs badly, it would perform the function of motherhood worst. But the appalling feature of this remarkable statement is its ignorance of biology. If sex is an accident, so is evolution. Sex is the one great instrument of the increasing purpose of the ages.

Talk of comradeship and equality, with the logical corollary of race culture by public crèche, is mere cackle — though to say so is to wrong the estimable gallinacean, who is by no means responsible for the introduction into the barnyard of state socialism in the form of an incubator.

Abhorrent as the idea may be to the Ibsen girl — whether mid-Victorian or late-Victorian, whether clothed in black crêpe de chine or in a red beard and trousers — the one sure salvation for the hectic and futile modern woman is a heightened sexual life, both in the bearing and the rearing of children. The normal energies of men are creative ; but what they create is dead — constitutions, institutions, works of invention and of art. The normal energies of women are procreative ; and what they procreate is alive — the men and women of the future, who shall give vigor and effect to constitutions and institutions, who shall transmute invention and art into terms of vital reality. The one great thing to be desired for the modern woman, as regards her individual character, is essential womanhood. The woman of the future will glory in her different nature ; and when she does so, men will at once fear her and adore her.

To-day we recruit the future mainly from the lower ranges of our life — the ill-begotten, uneducated, ill-bred children of diseased or embruted parents. The horse-racer and the stock-farmer know better. Not so the potential mother of the human thoroughbred. It is better, she says, to give one child all possible advantages than to scant the nurture and education of many. This is certainly better for the parents, if what they care for is personal ease and social distinction. But the case is far different if what they care for is the future of the race and of mankind.

To get the one plant necessary to improve a stock, Luther Burbank raises seedlings by hundreds of thousands. It is not soil or culture that produces the all-precious individual, but some unfathomable influence which can be developed only by working blindly in numbers. Benjamin Franklin was the youngest of seventeen children, no one of whom, except for him, would now be remembered. But if he had not been born, the history of our country would have been vastly different and vastly less fortunate. Far and wide, biography of the brothers of men of genius is a study in estimable mediocrity.

It need hardly be said that the problem of human eugenics is more difficult than that of the culture of plants and animals. We cannot mate young folk as we mate cattle, nor reject the unfit among children as among plants. And doubtless the ideal family biologically numbers far less than seventeen—probably less than seven. But within the limits imposed by science and by common sense we have choice, and the choice of the future will work toward breeding more largely from the vital aristocracy and less largely from the slums.

It is in the creation of an ever-advancing race, and only in this way, that women can regain their normal productive function. And the ground is cleared for them to do so. Thanks to the glorious mid-Victorian revolt, the freedom of the world is theirs. They are able to earn their own living, and so to choose their mates with far greater wisdom than during the long ages in which their industry was limited to and dominated by the household. In a word, they have a wider field of sexual selection. If, as sometimes happens, they are women such as Weininger describes, in whom the male character element predominates over the female, they are at liberty to live out their abnormal lives,

not as lilies that wither in an idleness none too sweet, but as the modern equivalent of spinsters — as wage-earners, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and priests. Whether spinsters or matrons, their horizon includes a vastly enhanced social life — the whole world of art and of science, and as much of political activity as in the long run they prove able to perform with profit. But to the normal woman, the aristocrat of biology, this free new life is of importance merely as it enlarges her nature and so perfects her in the function which women alone can perform, and which is the greatest of all functions, as life is greater than art, greater than institutions.

The plays that follow deal with two women whose lives are swayed by the very plausible ideals which have of late been current among us. They are not, I hope, thesis-plays — to write which, I take it, is to be false at once to art and to polemics. They merely represent character in a significant crisis. And they do this so far as possible in the manner of the popular playwright. In themselves the two heroines are, I feel, essentially sweet and normal. Indeed, I should be glad to think that both have essential dignity, even nobility of a sort. Both

come at last to the realization of what lies very deep in every woman's heart—the instinct of the race and of the future. One is passive and sentimental, and her fate is tragic. The other is active, and is possessed of the kindly demon of humor. If they help to a sincerer respect for normal womanhood, they will not have lived their little mimic lives in vain.

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HUSBAND

A Comedy in Three Acts

CHRONICLE

OF THE

141

IN MEMORY OF
CLARA BLOODGOOD
SINCERE ARTIST AND TRUE FRIEND



PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

MRS. ANTHONY HERKIMER WAYNE

TONY WAYNE, *her husband*

LORD EDMUND IFFLEY

MURIEL SCHUYLER

PHILIP ROBERTS

REBECCA LEVINE, *LL. B.*

SALLY JONES

MARY JONES (*called MAYSIE*)

MRS. ARCHER DENTON

RANDALL

ACT I

The Library of Wayne's House, near Madison Avenue

ACT II

Mrs. Wayne's Drawing-Room. Next Day

ACT III

*The Roof of an Apartment House in Madison Avenue,
Madison Square Tower in the distance. A week later*

NEW YORK. THE PRESENT

ACT I

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ACT I

SCENE :—*Wayne's Library. Typically a man's room, with wide, deep, easy chairs, simple, solid oak furniture generally, and dull, rich colors. The whole suggests inexpensive good taste and long use, verging upon shabbiness. The books are largely in legal calf bindings, and bear the appearance of having been much handled. There is a telephone at the desk, down right. Prominent among the pictures is an etching of the Harvard Yard. There are several large group photographs of athletic teams. Over the door at the right is a wide band of cloth, red at the ends and black in the central third, upon which are the letters in white, Anthony Herkimer Wayne. These are all former furnishings of a college room. There are no college pillows or colors. Outside the window is a yellowing locust tree, through which are dimly seen the backs of neighboring houses, warm with the light of a late Indian Summer afternoon. As the scene proceeds, twilight gathers and deepens into night.*

DISCOVERED :—*As the curtain rises, Wayne is at his desk, asleep, his head on his wrists, which are crossed above a mass of papers. His coat is on the floor beside him. He is wearing a colored shirt and belt.*

(Enter Randall.)

RANDALL

The lady, sir, from the Legal Aid Society.

WAYNE

(Waking wearily.)

Who?

RANDALL

The Jewish lady from the East Side. She insisted —

WAYNE

Show her up.

(Exit Randall. Wayne drowzes again.)

(After a brief pause, enter Miss Levine. She is of medium size, lithe, feline. Her hair is black, and her cheeks dark red and amber. She carries a copy of Town Topics, folded. At once aggressive and ill at ease in her present surroundings, she has walked ahead of the butler, and now, unaware of his intention to announce her, she closes the door, shutting him out. Seeing Wayne asleep, she stands irresolute; then she crosses swiftly and, picking up his coat, spreads it upon his shoulders, and turns to leave.)

WAYNE

(Waking.)

I beg pardon!

(He rises, struggling with sleep. The coat falls unheeded to the floor. His manner is modest and good-humored; but his presence is commanding and gives the impression of strong will and unswerving purpose. He is a man for whom the surface values of life do not exist, but who feels deeply the more vital issues.)

I've had no good sleep the past week. Cat-nap—to clear my wits before planning my speech this evening. You forgive me?

MISS LEVINE

Your campaign would n't tire you so. You've been wearing yourself out at your law practice.

WAYNE

Even a candidate has to live.

MISS LEVINE

Like Dr. Johnson, I don't see the necessity.

WAYNE

(Boyishly.)

You're always scolding me. It's no fair.

MISS LEVINE

(With a touch of coquetry.)

Always?

WAYNE

You scolded me into joining your Legal Aid Society —

MISS LEVINE

It's the best work of your lifetime — what you've done for the law-ridden poor. That's only one scolding.

WAYNE

You scolded me into politics.

MISS LEVINE

Yes. And now I've come to scold you into victory! Here you are, at the head of a popular movement

for decent government. Think what it means! After years of graft and waste, of all that's worst in our politics, you have it in your power —

WAYNE

Not my power. The people — if enough of them rebel against the machines . . .

MISS LEVINE

That's it — the machines! You have no machine — only your own personality. You have magnetism — though heaven knows how, you sleepy boy! A whirlwind finish, and all is ours. Yet you squander your strength in mere bread-winning!

WAYNE

(Changing the subject, with boyish guile.)

How's that book of yours coming on — Socialism and the Family?

MISS LEVINE

As I told you the last time you asked, it has been refused by all the publishers.

WAYNE

(Sympathetically.)

The devil! What excuse do they give?

MISS LEVINE

(With deep irony.)

One said socialists don't buy books, only talk them. People who buy books are respectable, and won't stand for free love.

WAYNE

Isn't there something in that? I've had it on my mind to scold *you*. Tell me about your child, Miss Levine.

MISS LEVINE

You're very clever. But you shan't sidetrack me. In your private practice, which wears you out so, you are dickering over the marriage settlement of an American heiress.

WAYNE

Lord Iffley has his attorney. I'm acting for Mr.

Schuyler. It's hideous folly. But where should we lawyers be if it were n't for fools?

MISS LEVINE

The candidate of the people—mixing up in the follies of the aristocracy! Or perhaps, with those colonial ancestors, you really are an aristocrat?

WAYNE

(Laughing.)

Both Herkimer and Mad Anthony were plain farmers and fought the British.

MISS LEVINE

Then your descent from them *is* a descent!

WAYNE

I'm fighting the British, too. Lord Iffley is ambitious for a public career. You won't admit it, but that takes money. His lawyer insists that Mr. Schuyler shell out three millions.

MISS LEVINE

Yankee dollars—to make an English career.

WAYNE

I'm putting a ramrod up the old man's back — advising him to call off the whole, sordid affair.

MISS LEVINE

People don't know that ; you are losing votes by the thousand.

WAYNE

(Suddenly serious.)

Who told you so?

MISS LEVINE

Ah, *now* you are *interested!* It's I who tell *you*. Night after night in the cafés, I meet business men, editors and district leaders. The East Side is turning against you !

WAYNE

(With the manner of the practical politician.)

That's bad. They are the backbone of our cause, your people.

MISS LEVINE

Throw up these private entanglements ! Get down to the issue, and you are in line to be governor, even President !

WAYNE

(Shrugging his shoulders.)

When you talk like that, I believe in myself least. And by that time, if I neglect my practice, I shall be in the poorhouse, with those who depend on me.

MISS LEVINE

(Significantly.)

Those who depend on you ! Was it your own choice that got you into this marriage mess ? Was it not your wife — her social ambition, her desire to have a finger in the pie of swelldom ?

WAYNE

(Indulgently, but firmly.)

Miss Levine !

MISS LEVINE

I can't understand you American men. When you stood forth boldly as an independent, both machines tried to throw a laugh at you. In ten days you had thrown a fright into them. Both sneaked round and tried to get you on the regular tickets.

WAYNE

(*Smiling.*)

The bosses *were* most ingratiating — in private.

MISS LEVINE

Yet, having bossed the bosses, you are under the thumb of your wife !

WAYNE

(*With mounting indignation.*)

Even if that were true, it would n't concern us now.

MISS LEVINE

You mean it's none of *my* business ! But it *is* *your* business.

(*She takes the periodical from under her arm, opens it, and points to an article.*)

WAYNE

(Glances at the opening paragraph. His eyebrows lower, and his face expresses indignation ; but he commands himself, and, returning the paper, says in a tone of unconcern.)

Back-stairs gossip. No one reads such stuff. I never heard of it till this moment.

MISS LEVINE

(Turning to the front page and pointing to the date.)

The issue of next Saturday. To-morrow every paper on the East Side will be saying one thing : while you are professing in public to be the candidate of the people, in private you are a parasite of swollen fortunes — bartering a girl of eighteen, body and soul, for an English title !

WAYNE

You are frightfully melodramatic.

MISS LEVINE

I may be melodramatic. *You* will be a joke — a marriage broker ! I can see the headlines — Wayne as Shadchen.

WAYNE

(With affected indifference.)

An old and honorable profession — Shadchen.

MISS LEVINE

Meantime your wife is carrying on an affair with the noble bridegroom.

WAYNE

(With a flash of anger.)

Miss Levine! I must ask you to leave me to my writing.

(He crosses toward the door.)

MISS LEVINE

It's not I who say this. It's all here.

(She points to the conclusion of the article.)

WAYNE

(Glancing at the paper.)

Blackguards!

MISS LEVINE

I have warned you. Unless you stamp out this scandal, it will ruin our cause. Now you may show me the door.

WAYNE

(Regaining good nature.)

I have n't time to be angry with my enemies — certainly not with my friends.

(Kindly.)

Tell me, how's your book on free love coming on?

MISS LEVINE

(Sardonically.)

Nothing has happened since I told you, just now, that all the publishers have refused it.

(With a touch of anger.)

Why do you pretend interest in me?

WAYNE

I *am* interested, Miss Levine, really.

(As if correcting a false start.)

Tell me about your child.

MISS LEVINE

That at least is published. You take the moral attitude!

WAYNE

If it's the moral attitude to be deeply interested. Yours is the only case I have ever known of — of the new marriage.

MISS LEVINE

That man — I'm well rid of him.

WAYNE

I was thinking of your child. Has he no need of a home?

MISS LEVINE

At least I *have* a child. Your American women, correct and sexless . . .

(Enter Mrs. Wayne. She is typically an American girl, regular and distinguished in features, frank and bright in manner, with a pronounced air of one used to having her own way. Her dress, which is in exquisite good taste, contrasts strongly with Miss

Levine's work-a-day simplicity. Randall follows with a bridge table covered with cards. Miss Levine, ill at ease, draws back toward the wall near the door.)

WAYNE

You can't come in here.

(To Randall.)

Take that thing away!

(Randall hesitates as if questioning the order, then goes out with the bridge table.)

CLORA

(Who has not noticed Miss Levine.)

Miss Schuyler has telephoned she's coming. Heaven knows why she should; but in another minute she'll ring. We've only one game more — twelve and a half cents a point! I'm winning and can hardly stop.

WAYNE

Miss Schuyler will sit by till you've finished. I have only twenty minutes to sketch my speech.

CLORA

But Lord Iffley is with us!

WAYNE

(Significantly.)

Oh!

CLORA

If Miss Schuyler found him here! Things have happened . . .

WAYNE

(Significantly.)

They have.

MISS LEVINE

(Coming forward.)

Good day, Mr. Wayne. Good luck to your speech.

(Incisively.)

And to your career as boss of the bosses.

(Mrs. Wayne greets her pleasantly, but she bows distantly and goes out, conducted by Randall.)

CLORA

(Firmly.)

There's not another room in the house. It's only Alice Denton and Philip.

WAYNE

You have Philip to meet Lord Iffley? You know Philip has always cared for Miss Schuyler.

CLORA

Philip just *happened*. He's a good sportsman and sat in to make a game.

(Laying her hands on his shoulders and her cheek against his, yet still firmly.)

Put on your coat, Tony.

WAYNE

(Decisively.)

No! I won't be interrupted. This time I'll have my own way.

CLORA

But where *shall* we go?

WAYNE

(In a commanding tone, though good-humored.)

Go to the devil ! Only shut that door.

CLORA

The dinner table is being set. The seamstress is in our room. If you *will* live in a house as big as your pocket !

WAYNE

Shut that door !

CLORA

(Falling back before his vehemence toward the door.)

We won't disturb you. Bridge is *whist*, you know.

WAYNE

SHUT THAT DOOR !

CLORA

Hush ! They are just outside and have heard you !

(The doorbell rings.)

Miss Schuyler, already !

WAYNE

(*Good-humored.*)

Oh, well.

(*Calling out.*)

Come in everybody !

(*Enter Mrs. Denton and Sally, and after them Lord Iffley and Philip Roberts. They have evidently been waiting outside the door. The men bring in a mahogany bridge table and four gilded chairs. The party strikes a note of luxury contrasting strongly with Wayne's sober environment. Philip is in a business suit. Iffley wears a handsome frock coat and tie. They play, Sally sitting out.*)

CLORA

(*With light scorn.*)

"Shut that door !"

(*Apologetically.*)

Tony is a bear.

WAYNE

Clora did n't drop to my Parisian accent. I said,
Je t'adore, je t'adore ! .

(*Writes.*)

CLORA

(Dealing.)

Tony, you might put on your coat.

(Wayne does not heed her, but lights a pipe and goes on writing.)

Tony!

IFFLEY

(Intervening.)

It's your make, partner.

CLORA

I've been five years training him, and he isn't even house-broken.

IFFLEY

Your make, Mrs. Wayne.

CLORA

Tony, *do* put on your coat!

WAYNE

(Swinging round on her.)

I won't be bossed. When we married, we agreed

that if I gave you your way in the little differences, you would give me mine in the big ones.

(Ironically.)

We must have been very happy. For five years, we've only had *little* differences.

CLORA

Then put it on, dear.

WAYNE

This at last is a *big* difference.

(Puffs vigorously and writes.)

CLORA

If you don't respect me, you might your guests !

WAYNE

I tell you, I *won't* be bossed !

IFFLEY

Your make, partner.

(Reaching across the table, he presses her hand to recall her to the game.)

I say, but what a hand!

PHILIP

(Quietly, but with intention.)

If you could only play the hands you hold, Iffley,
— grand slam!

IFFLEY

(Ignoring this.)

It is still your make, partner.

WAYNE

(Turning again.)

For heaven's sake, Clora, pretend you're dummy
and talk!

CLORA

I don't know whether to make it an anæmic heart
or a bold, bad no-trump. Without!

MRS. DENTON

I go over.

(They play.)

IFFLEY

(Laying down the dummy.)

This is n't a hand — not even a foot: it's a hoof.
Ha, ha! an Americanism for Yarborough!

(He takes Clara's hand consolingly.)

PHILIP

Iffley, you'd make your fortune in a massadj
parlor.

CLORA

(A little shocked laugh.)

Philip!

(Enter Randall.)

RANDALL

Miss Schuyler, in the drawing-room, madam.

CLORA

I'll be there, presently.

(Exit Randall.)

SALLY

(A pretty, wholesome girl of nineteen, with a solemn sense of humor.)

I do miss Alfonso.

IFFLEY

(Joining her.)

Alfonso, Miss Jones?

SALLY

My poor, dear husband. You have n't met him?
Alas, neither have I.

CLORA

Don't interrupt, Sally.

(To Iffley.)

From a child, instead of playing dolls, she's played she had a husband. Everything I do to Tony she pretends to do it to Alfonso.

IFFLEY

By Jove!

(Looks at Sally with frank admiration.)

Lucky Alfonso!

SALLY

Do you think so? He used to mind it dreadfully, poor, dear angel-face. He could n't believe how needful it was to keep him in his place. Blessed baby-lamb.

(She goes to Wayne and passes her hand across his shoulders.)

WAYNE

(Reaching out and patting her arm.)

Love to Alfonso.

(Sally turns on the electric light and draws down the shades, then takes up a book and sits reading.)

(The telephone rings. Wayne speaks low but distinctly. His back is to the bridge party, which is intent on its game.)

WAYNE

Yes, I've seen it.

(Listens.)

I know. They 're calling me Wayne the Shadchen.

(Listens.)

I *can't* throw up the case. And if I did, they 'd all say I was knuckling under to the pee-pul. And I should be! They 'd have me tied to the third rail. I'm in for it, and I've got to see it through.

(Listens.)

Yes, he 's here — but what *of* it?

(Listens.)

See here! If I were a machine candidate, you might talk to me like that. But you fellows are no machine! Not even a monkey wrench!

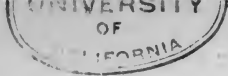
(Listens.)

You know why I took that case, and what I'm trying to do. Tell the reporters that.

(Listens.)

If the truth is too thin, then say nothing. Yes, I *am* a candidate of the people. But I 'm no damn demagogue! If you must talk — to-night after the meeting. That 'll do for you now. Tell your troubles to Central! I've got enough of my own.

(Hangs up the receiver with a snap.)



ACT I]

HUSBAND

35

CLORA

Tony. *Will* you put on your coat!

WAYNE

I tell you no. Do you want to boss me in every little act!

(He goes on writing.)

CLORA

(In sudden exasperation.)

Husband!

MRS. DENTON AND SALLY

(Alarmed.)

Clora!

WAYNE

(Half rises and speaks in a tone of exasperated rage.)

How do you dare . . .!

CLORA

*(Crosses to him and speaks soothingly, to avoid a scene.
The others are politely unconscious.)*

Tony, dear, I only asked you to look decent. Such

a little thing! Why will you be so selfish? To please you, I'd do it a thousand times.

WAYNE

(With an ironical glance at her frock.)

In the matter of dress, your unselfishness is monumental. The pleasure is altogether mine.

CLORA

Then put on your coat — for me.

WAYNE

Oh, I'm a bear; but, if you *will* come in here . . . To please me, would you give up the least of your *feminine* vices? Would you stop breaking in on my work? Would you stop bossing and jarring and nagging? That is the *real* test between us. Observe: to please you, I put it on.

(He puts it on with an air of boyish chagrin.)

(With a breath of relief Clora returns to the table.)

(As Wayne sits down to write, he relights his pipe and throws the match at the waste basket. It falls on the

floor, still lighted. He reaches out his foot, grinds it into the carpet, and goes on writing.)

CLORA

(Who has watched him, annoyed.)

How often have I told you *not* to throw matches on the floor! And that pipe! Pouff! It smells as if you smoked your old gum shoes.

(On a sudden impulse, Wayne gets up without a word, glares at Clora, takes off his coat, throws it on the floor, and then resumes his writing.)

CLORA

Husband!

(She plays a card and then, more scornfully.)

Husband!

(Surveying his negligée with concentrated distaste.)

HUSBAND!

WAYNE

(An outburst.)

I *am* your husband — yes! Good God, when I see the women of this land, I wonder what sin we've committed to deserve them!

(Clora faces him as if to answer, but controls herself.)

IFFLEY

(To Wayne, making light of the situation, yet in the tone of approval.)

That's the way to treat 'em. I'm hot myself.

(Taking off his frock coat, he throws it on a chair.)

WAYNE

(Regaining good nature.)

Yes, do! Take off your overcoat.

(To Clora.)

I have n't lost my temper — only mislaid it.

IFFLEY

(Quite lightly, yet as one used to the prerogative of the man and the nobleman.)

What you need in America is an agitation for *men's* rights. Sufferin'-gents, eh?

(He lights a cigarette and sits down smoking.)

(Wayne laughs, relights his pipe, lays his watch open before him, and is lost again in his work.)

CLORA

Because Tony is a bear, Lord Iffley, you don't have to be an Indian.

IFFLEY

Isn't this what you call Indian Summer?

(Softly to Clora.)

The man is due in an hour to address twenty thousand people. You don't want him to expose a naked intellect.

CLORA

He's worst when he speaks his full mind. Then there's danger of Anthony Comstock.

WAYNE

(Leaps to his feet.)

Will you stop whispering! I tell you I *must* have one place where I can work. Either you leave this room or I do.

CLORA

(Alarmed.)

Yes, do go somewhere else.

(*Wayne, gathering up his papers, strides to the door, still smoking his pipe.*)

CLORA

Where are you going!

WAYNE

To the drawing-room.

CLORA

Miss Schuyler is there!

WAYNE

It's too late to go to the club. I can't sit out on the curbstone.

(*Exit.*)

CLORA

(*Running to the door.*)

Tony! Take your coat!

WAYNE

(*His voice receding in the hall.*)

Coat be damned!

(Sally, with an annoyed look, puts her nose in her book.)

CLORA

Coatless in the drawing-room with Miss Schuyler!
And that pipe! I never saw Tony so pig-headed.

(She resumes her seat and, with an effort of self-control, plays her last card.)

Little slam on us, partner — doubled.

IFFLEY

(Casting up the score.)

Why make it without — on three knaves and a guarded nine spot? Roberts and Mrs. Denton — even, by Jove, on the four rubbers. Mrs. Wayne — that bold, bad make of yours has reduced your winnings to forty-eight dollars.

(He puts on his coat and looks in his pocket-book.)

I have n't that much on me!

(With Clora he stands apart from the bridge table.)

I shall meet you at dinner — the Slades?

CLORA

I regretted. Sally and I dine at home.

IFFLEY

Then I'll be back here in a jiffy. Au revoir.

(Fervently.)

You wonderful creature!

(To the others.)

Good-night. Good-night!

(Exit.)

SALLY

(Throwing down her book.)

I'm off to dress for dinner.

CLORA

You're dining out? I shall be alone, then.

SALLY

Oh, I *am* sorry! The Blagdens asked me to fill in.

(Exit.)

(A brief silence.)

PHILIP

If Muriel has come to ask your advice — she thinks

a whole lot of you, Clora ! — remember, she has no one else to help her. She 's always been led by her mother.

(On a sudden thought.)

It is n't for myself I 'm speaking. She never cared for me — never will care ! Only, I know she does n't really care for — for any one else. In the end she 's the sort of girl to suffer from — that sort of marriage. If she does talk it over with you —

CLORA

(With genuine kindness.)

I 'll do the best I can, Philip.

PHILIP

I 'm sure you will. Good-by.

(Exit.)

CLORA

(Her whole manner changing, presses her temples with her palms.)

Quarreling in public !

(Bitterly.)

Oh ! Oh !

MRS. DENTON

It's Lord Iffley — the marriage — that has got on Tony's nerves. And, Clara, it was you who made him mix up in it.

CLORA

Why not? He has only to become known to such people to form the most valuable connections — get the big, important cases; rise to the top of his profession. While he has fought to keep the Jews from sweating each other, and mixed up in hare-brained politics, he has kept us poor.

MRS. DENTON

Poor? Years ago I wrote an article for the Sunday papers arguing that young people in New York can't live on less than fifteen thousand a year —

CLORA

(Interrupting.)

That's all we have now.

MRS. DENTON

Yes, but *then*! You and Tony were engaged on

nothing a year. You called me fifteen kinds of a liar — rubbed it in that Archie and I were living on twenty-five hundred ; that I only wrote the article to pay the rent. Clora, you 've become terribly high-life !

CLORA

You, too ! You made Archie build your studio house, on mortgage, to stand in with the rich and paint their portraits.

MRS. DENTON

(With a little shrug.)

It should have trebled his income. Only, along came those magazine exposures. Just as we moved in, all our best citizens were muckraked, and family portraits went out of fashion.

CLORA

(Laughing.)

Well, then !

MRS. DENTON

(Ruefully.)

Archie still paints pot-boilers, and I still write soci-

ety gossip. Were n't we all happier — we with our chafing-dish meals, you in that dingy old apartment where callers whistled up a tube?

CLORA

I remember those days. Tony loved me. Better, I loved *him*!

MRS. DENTON

If we could go back to them!

CLORA

It was a different world.

MRS. DENTON

A world in which we were all happy. If we *could* go back —!

CLORA

The question is, could Tony! That is the tragedy of life. A woman is always a woman: a man, when he marries, is a husband. Quarreling in public! *This* is the beginning of the end.

MRS. DENTON

Have you thought of the end — the end of your husband? Miss Levine, and her oriental beauty?

CLORA

(Surprised.)

Miss Levine?

MRS. DENTON

From the moment Tony joined her in the Legal Aid Society, she threw over the father of that child of hers and worked with Tony, side by side. While you are amusing yourself, she holds the place that belongs to you.

CLORA

(Laughing a little harshly.)

Tony have an affair! *Tony!* All he can do is to sit in a corner and make a noise like a husband.

MRS. DENTON

But if somebody sits beside him and makes a noise like a wife?

CLORA

Not with Tony. If he ever had a thought of her, he'll forget her as soon as he is beaten and out of politics.

MRS. DENTON

If he *is* beaten. But he has gained strength with every speech he's made. All over the country the people are rebelling against the bosses. Both regular parties are terribly scared at your Tony.

CLORA

But if he wins, he'll have to give up his profession — just as he is making the most valuable associations. Can you see us — living on the salary of an honest politician?

MRS. DENTON

Are you sure you don't *want* Tony to be beaten?

CLORA

(*Genuinely offended.*)

Alice! *Alice!*

MRS. DENTON

Then at least you can set him right in this marriage muddle.

CLORA

II

MRS. DENTON

I overheard Tony at the telephone. The nose for news! His managers want him to publish a statement.

CLORA

Well?

MRS. DENTON

They say the truth is too thin. But not the whole truth — as I know it.

CLORA

As you know it?

MRS. DENTON

You will admit, in the matter of his coat Tony acted the man of the people.

CLORA

Quite. Oh, quite ! The pee-pul !

MRS. DENTON

He converted Lord Iffley to play bridge in his shirtsleeves. At this moment he is with the most famous heiress in the country — coatless in the drawing-room.

CLORA

But —

MRS. DENTON

The two great news topics are Miss Schuyler's marriage and Tony's campaign. A story that combines them, throws an unexpected light on both, will get a full page, and no end of comment.

CLORA

But Lord Iffley — Miss Schuyler ! They are my guests.

MRS. DENTON

I can't urge you. Yet, if you really want Tony to win, a situation that is compromising you all can

be turned into the *strongest* campaign document. Thousands of votes for Tony! Lord Iffley is coming back here. Why not ask him?

CLORA

Make political capital out of what passes beneath my roof?

(Enter Randall.)

RANDALL

Miss Schuyler is dining out, madam, and can remain only a moment.

CLORA

Tell her I'll be right in.

RANDALL

Mr. Wayne, madam, is there. I spoke to him. I would n't advise, madam —

CLORA

Ask Miss Schuyler in here.

(Exit Randall.)

MRS. DENTON

You forgive me?

(They kiss.)

If Lord Iffley agrees, let me know.

(Exit.)

(Enter Miss Schuyler, announced by Randall. She is delicately beautiful and aristocratic ; at once shy and girlishly frank.)

CLORA

Pardon me for keeping you. There has been a piece in the paper about me, and friends came — to *console* me.

MISS SCHUYLER

I saw it. You *know* I could n't believe such things.

CLORA

(Impulsively.)

Bless you for that — and for coming to tell me !

MISS SCHUYLER

Yet — I've always had a doubt. And to-day —

CLORA

To-day?

MISS SCHUYLER

My old nurse, Mary Finnerty, said they were selling me, my body and my soul, to a man of the blackest character. I laughed — she's Irish and hates the nobility; but she showed me the paper, and *painted such* a picture! Of course I don't believe her —

CLORA

Of course.

MISS SCHUYLER

Yet she said — I *must* know if it is true!

CLORA

(*With warm sympathy.*)

Tell me, dear.

MISS SCHUYLER

— that young noblemen — and women — live only to amuse themselves. So many American girls have married abroad and — gone wrong! In New York it is coming to be as bad. She said — I can't

say it! But for a moment, it made me believe that in the end, if I marry a man who does n't love me, I shall be so too — that *everybody* . . . I don't believe it! And yet, if Lord Iffley — if you — You are not angry with me?

CLORA

(*With young motherly tenderness.*)

Dear child, no. When I first saw the world — what is black in it — I suffered, oh, I *did* suffer! — horror, a feeling of degradation. So does every young girl. And your case is *so* much harder! Even if I were all your old nurse said, dearest, I could n't be angry, only love you the more. Has your mother never talked to you —?

MISS SCHUYLER

Never. She put me off — makes me feel that she thinks as ill of men as old Mary.

CLORA

I'll tell you the truth. There are many bad people, men and women. The luxurious and the fashionable may be worse than others — I can't say. It is true that Lord Iffley and I have seen a good deal

of each other. He was among those who came in this afternoon.

MISS SCHUYLER

I heard his voice.

CLORA

But that I am what the paper, your nurse, said — never, in deed or in thought!

MISS SCHUYLER

(Throwing her arms about Clora.)

I knew it, I knew it! I'm so glad! If you had been angry or hesitated, even a moment — *what* I should have suffered!

CLORA

I know many women in New York. Some of them are bad; more are weak or reckless; but most of all, even those who know the world best, are innocent as you are.

MISS SCHUYLER

(Kissing her with affectionate, almost hysterical laughter.)

I knew it, I knew it, I knew it!

(Standing away from Clara.)

You don't mind, Mrs. Wayne?

CLORA

I love you for it.

(Taking her again in her arms.)

MISS SCHUYLER

May I talk to you about Lord Iffley — about Edmund?

CLORA

Surely — if you wish.

MISS SCHUYLER

You think him charming?

CLORA

Very charming — very. He has the Eton and the Oxford manner — amusing, winning, yet manly : dangerous, too ; for everything he has wanted he has always had it. He is *quite* the nobleman.

MISS SCHUYLER

And if he wanted — *me*? Would he see so little of me, so much of — of others?

CLORA

You yourself can tell best.

MISS SCHUYLER

He said he did, and he — was so charming !

(She turns away her face.)

I know I'm a little fool. But you're the only one I can talk to who knows him ! He *is* charming ! But so he is to everyone. And after he — spoke to me — that very day — did you hear ? — he drank too much at the club, and then at a dance. If he only said what he said — forced himself to say it — If he loves — some one else — you would tell me . . .

CLORA

(After a brief pause.)

Is n't the important question whether you love him ?

MISS SCHUYLER

But how can I tell ? There never has been any one else — except Philip, and he's more a brother . . .

CLORA

If you loved Lord Iffley, I think you would know it. I am sure you'd not come with all this to me.

MISS SCHUYLER

I told mother I did n't. She said, of course not — that it's better I should n't ; that the best, the most lasting love comes after marrying — the love of a husband. Do you *think* so?

CLORA

(*Exclaiming.*)

A husband ! Do you know what a husband is ? A wild, dangerous, glorious thing that has become stupidly tame. A kitten on the hearthrug is more exciting — much less a nuisance ! No, no. Better once in a lifetime have love !

MISS SCHUYLER

Then you advise . . . ?

CLORA

I can't advise — for personal reasons.

MISS SCHUYLER

But if Lord Iffley . . . if Edmund . . . if *I* . . .

CLORA

The reasons are connected with Tony.

MISS SCHUYLER

Mr. Wayne! All along he has influenced father against the marriage. Mother is furious.

CLORA

People don't know that. It's hurting him dreadfully in politics. I got him to act for your father, and now, to be square, I have to get him out of the fix. I want you to call off the whole affair — by Tony's advice.

MISS SCHUYLER

But if it were n't for that?

CLORA

The instinct that made you come to me — I think it was right. But remember! I have Tony's axe to grind.

MISS SCHUYLER

(Impulsively.)

Even if he is a husband, dearie, you *do* love him !
I can't bear to think —

CLORA

(With sub-acid amusement.)

You saw him in the drawing-room — ?

MISS SCHUYLER

Writing — his speech ! What was he thinking —
the few words he was jotting down — to-night in
Madison Square, with that great, deep voice of
his and his splendid presence, it will rouse thou-
sands, tens of thousands, to cheer after cheer !

CLORA

His voice — did he speak to you ? His presence
— you saw the shirtsleeves ?

MISS SCHUYLER

A great, burly, untidy boy. When the butler came
in, he roared like a lion.

CLORA

Or like a husband.

MISS SCHUYLER

A lion! I adore lions. Did you ever want to have as a pet a huge, soft lion that, except for his love for you, would sink his claws into you, take your throat in his white teeth — tear you to pieces?

CLORA

You have thought that! Then it is best, dear child, to wait for the lion.

(Enter Wayne, looking at his watch. With a hurried, absent nod, he crosses and picks up his coat.)

MISS SCHUYLER

Mr. Wayne! Roar like a lion! Gnash your teeth, devour her! She adores it!

(She laughs and kisses Clora, who embraces her.)

You have made me *so* happy!

(Exit.)

WAYNE

What's that nonsense!

(Passing Clora near the door.)

Oh, don't sit up for me. My managers are going to row me about this mess. I shan't be back till the small hours.

(He turns to go.)

CLORA

Tony . . .

WAYNE

(Remembering, he takes her face between his hands and kisses her cheek in a perfunctory way.)

Sleep well, dearest.

CLORA

Tony!

WAYNE

(Turning.)

Yes?

CLORA

For the first time, after five years, we have quarreled — in public! You leave me without a word.

WAYNE

(Absently.)

I'm tired, dear, and cross. I'll try to be better.

CLORA

*(Discouraged.)*You *are* a husband !

WAYNE

*(Facing her earnestly.)*Are *you* my wife ?

CLORA

Your wife ! Your ideal of a wife is a strenuous, high-browed person. Men fall in love with their opposites—then expect their wives to be like themselves, precisely.

WAYNE

Jove, I never thought of that.

(Amused.)

A wife like me—how I should adore her !

(Delighted with a new idea.)

Every man his own true wife—what a lot of trouble it would save !

*(Kisses her again.)*Good-by. Yet I *am* rather fond of you, too.

CLORA

Of me, too — rather fond.

(A wry face.)

Good-by, my husband, good-by!

WAYNE

(Seriously.)

What has come over you? As a girl you were quiet, domestic.

CLORA

Domestic? Have you forgotten how we lived — grandmem, Sally and I?

WAYNE

The most beautiful apartment in all the city!

CLORA

As a lover you used to say that. It was a mere hutch on top of an apartment house — built for the janitor. We were so poor, it was that or the suburbs. Domestic? Quiet? I married to escape domestic quiet — to get a lover.

WAYNE

(With a touch of boyish grotesque.)

To get me. Cheer up! You've got me.

(He makes as if to go.)

CLORA

(In a dry tone.)

You speak as if you were a disease. Oh, I've got you.

WAYNE

I married for a wife —

CLORA

(Bitterly.)

For a wife like you!

WAYNE

(Still delighted with the idea.)

Don't remind me of my lost happiness!

(Ruefully.)

I got a woman in society.

CLORA

(Laughing a little harshly.)

At least we are better off than the Wellowbys. Each married the other for his money, and between them they had n't enough to buy a divorce. We *can* get one.

WAYNE

Nonsense, dear.

CLORA

In reality, with your work day and night, we are divorced already.

WAYNE

My work? Is n't it your social climbing? They think they have to have you everywhere Iffley goes — without *me*. You used to have one hour in the day for me.

CLORA

Then I *was* bored! You ate like a commercial drummer at the station, and bolted to catch the train. Evening after evening I spent alone — until I knew by heart every spot on the wall paper — as

a prisoner knows the stones of his cell. I thought marriage meant freedom — and found myself a convict. Even now when we meet at midnight, for the first time all day, you answer me “yes,” “no,” with the face of a pudding, and fall asleep beside me like a log.

WAYNE

In New York that is scarcely ground for divorce. Clora, dear !

(Looking at his watch.)

You are only tired out — suffering from over-excited nerves.

CLORA

True — over-excited nerves ! But they are not *my* nerves !

WAYNE

(Earnestly.)

Are you quite square with me ? To pay your bills I grind myself into a stupor — and you round on me for being dull. I go short of sleep for weeks, until my nerves are jumping ; and you find amusement with — others. Really, *is* it square ?

CLORA

Listen to the heart-throbs of the American husband. The world thinks you a poor, driven beast—but you are having the time of your life. The only thing you care for is work—and you revel in it day and night. You rate me for extravagance—you, who have left me only the interests that money can buy! With love I could live on nothing—and did so, as long as you gave me love. Give it again, and I will forget the whole world!

WAYNE

Are you really unhappy?

CLORA

Yes! Miserably unhappy!

(*Vehemently.*)

You, with your calm sense of justice, your unanswerable reason, tell me, have you been square to *me*? I was a young girl. Your strength and your love awoke in me a whole world of enjoyment, of tenderness, of passion. You made me laugh with you—and you *can* be amusing, though heaven knows no one would suspect it. You made

me proud of you, fear you, worship you! If I am mad for excitement, it is you who taught me that madness! Then you left me alone and lonesome, to eat out my heart in neglect. We are divorced in spirit, and we shall be so in fact!

WAYNE

Sweetheart! You are yourself—you could n't do anything that is not clean, and honest.

CLORA

That is your idea of honesty—to live on coldly with a man who has become a stranger. Virtue is a passion, or it is nothing. It is warm, warm, warm!

WAYNE

(Tenderly.)

I do love you, with all my heart. And you love me. In all these five years, we have not been separated one single night.

CLORA

If you could only make me believe you—feel I believe you!

(He takes her in his arms.)

When people love each other, do they grow so *dreadfully* far apart?

WAYNE

Are we so *dreadfully* far apart?

CLORA

It is my birthday. I refused a dinner to Lord Iffley, hoping you'd give me this one evening. Tony, I need you! You forgot — as you forgot last year. If I was cross just now, that's why!

WAYNE

I did n't forget.

(*Going to his desk.*)

I put a memorandum on my calendar, eight days ago. Only —

(*Fumbling the leaves.*)

I have n't had time since to tear off the leaves.

CLORA

(*Reads the calendar over his shoulder.*)

"Clora's birthday. This time, hump yourself!"

(*A grimace.*)

WAYNE

(He takes her in his arms and kisses her playfully, three times.)

One for each year!

(He releases her.)

CLORA

But that's only three.

WAYNE

That's all the older you are, child—or you'd never doubt we love each other.

CLORA

Pretend I'm four.

(He kisses her in a perfunctory manner.)

Five! I don't mind a bit how old I am.

(He kisses her.)

Six! It's so long since we've been like this!

WAYNE

We've *always* been like this.

(As he says this, he covertly looks again at his watch.)

Heavens, I ought to be speaking my piece this minute.

(He snatches up his coat and goes out hurriedly.)

CLORA

(As if still speaking to Wayne.)

Always like this! Love by time-table! Cupid catching the train!

(She sits down, with her hands in her lap.)

One little lover, sitting all alone. She married him, and then she had none!

(She picks up Iffley's bridge score, looks at it with a moment's interest, then wearily throws it down.)

(Enter Sally in a dinner-gown.)

SALLY

It's dinner bridge. I shan't be back till the small hours. You'll be here all alone? Get a good sleep, do.

CLORA

(Stifling a little yawn.)

Sleep? I'm suffering from over-excited nerves.

SALLY

(Not heeding this.)

Good-night!

(Exit.)

CLORA

(Folding her hands again.)

By this time the lion is roaring

*(Half covers a larger yawn.)**(Enter Randall.)*

RANDALL

His Lordship to see you, madam.

CLORA

Hold dinner till half past eight.

*(Exit Randall.)**(Clora rises with animation, and paces the room.)**(Lord Iffley is announced and enters. He has on a dinner jacket.)*

IFFLEY

Alone? That's lucky.

CLORA

(With a little start.)

Lucky?

IFFLEY

(With good-natured embarrassment.)

Fact is, I've got to welch a bit on that bridge score.

CLORA

(Relieved.)

Oh!

IFFLEY

(Taking a check from his pocket-book.)

That's every last penny I have in the bank, and it leaves me four dollars shy.

CLORA

(Takes the check mechanically.)

But if this is all you have —

IFFLEY

It's only a few days till my next remittance — if you'll trust me for the rest?

CLORA

But meantime — if I may — How will you live?

IFFLEY

(Cheerfully.)

I always dine out. Sometimes I'm asked to luncheon! For breakfast — they hang me up at your hospitable clubs.

CLORA

But pocket money! I can't leave you destitute!

IFFLEY

(Lightly, but with latent dignity.)

Mind your own business, fair lady!

CLORA

(Protesting.)

Edmund!

IFFLEY

Clorinda!

CLORA

Show me that you have pocket money!

IFFLEY

Is this what you call a hold-up?

CLORA

Show me a single dollar!

IFFLEY

You do like havin' your own way.

CLORA

Half a dollar!

IFFLEY

And you'll drop the subject?

CLORA

Agreed.

IFFLEY

(Produces a half dollar, flips it in the air, and pockets it with a grin.)

You *are* a good sort, Clorinda. Honor bright, if I really needed money, I'd as soon borrow from you as any felleh!

CLORA

Then let me —

(She moves to tear up the check.)

IFFLEY

(Taking her firmly by the hands.)

No, no. You shan't boss me!

CLORA

(Resigning her hands to him.)

With this matter on hand, you *must* keep up appearances.

IFFLEY

(Dropping her hands.)

Wretched business. Don't remind me.

CLORA

But if it falls through! Tony is doing his best against you. Miss Schuyler asked my advice. I could n't encourage her.

IFFLEY

Nor I. The day I — asked her, I — what do you

call it — I fell off the sprinklin' wagon. For two years I'd been — up with the driver, smackin' the whip.

CLORA

Then why, *why* do you do it?

IFFLEY

I want to go in for politics. Among my disagreeable traits is a sense of public duty. I'm feahfully keen about the Empire! But I've an uncle — one Earl, and a cousin, his noble heir . . .

CLORA

I know.

IFFLEY

They detest me. My pasty-faced cousin was Master of Hounds. He's a rotten horseman and they made me Master in his place. Made 'em peevish; — tied up my money, on a technicality. And there's a sort of a tradition — coves like me are always marryin' money.

(Enter Randall with a long, slender florist's box.)

RANDALL

A package for you, madam.

(Exit.)

CLORA

(Opening the box.)

A single, splendid rose. Who could have sent it?

IFFLEY

Oh, charmin'? What did you say you advised?

CLORA

I can't interfere.

IFFLEY

The trouble is, you *have* interfered.

CLORA

I?

IFFLEY

Until I met you, I was all for the main chance.
But by heaven, you're a new sort on me!

(As if accusing her.)

Do you know that you have a man's sense of

honor, and of comradeship ! You have shown me your whole frank heart, and it has called out a nature that is better than my best. I spare you the mention of sundry eyes and a smile — that worry me enough, however.

(With quiet but intense passion.)

With you here, good God, *how* can I do it ! Every time I think of it I find myself — climbin' down from that sprinklin' cart.

(Clora covers her eyes with her hands. Iffley walks away from her toward the window.)

(Reënter Randall with another and similar box.)

CLORA

(Opening it.)

Another ! Two people thought of the same ?

(She puts it in another vase.)

(To Randall.)

Did they come together ?

RANDALL

Yes, madam.

IFFLEY

Charmin'.

(Mocking.)

How beautifully you arrange flowers! Now if I were doing it —

(He takes her hand, and picking up the rose, drops it in the same position.)

That is n't half as pretty. You do it right, Clorinda.

(He does not, however, let go of her hand.)

CLORA

(Withdrawing it.)

Edmund!

(Reënter Randall with a third box like the rest.)

IFFLEY

Another! By Jove!

CLORA

Who can be sending them! Three!

(To Randall.)

Are there any more?

RANDALL

No more, madam.

(Exit.)

CLORA

Three! It must be Tony! My birthday! One for each year!

IFFLEY

Three? You're gettin' along, Clorinda, gettin' along.

CLORA

Think of Tony's remembering! He took time on his way to his meeting! Cupid caught the train!

(With animation she goes to the desk.)

I'll write him a note — to be delivered while he's tearing the public to bits.

IFFLEY

(Following her, takes her hand, and tries to prevent her writing.)

I would n't! I would n't!

CLORA

You remember what Philip said at bridge?

IFFLEY

“ Make my fortune ” — the rascal — “ in a massadj parlor.”

CLORA

This is not a massage parlor.

IFFLEY

(*With dignity.*)

Clorinda !

CLORA

And it 's not here your fortune awaits you !

IFFLEY

(*Proudly.*)

I stand rebuked.

CLORA

Ring for Randall, and tell him to call a messenger.

(*Iffley rings, though with evident reluctance.*)

(*Clora writes.*)

(*Enter Randall.*)

IFFLEY

(Crossing to the door.)

A messenger.

(In a lowered voice.)

Very well done, Randall.

(He puts the half dollar in Randall's hand.)

RANDALL

I thank your Lordship.

CLORA

(Looks about and sees this. Her face changes.)

Never mind, Randall. I shan't need the messenger.

(Randall bows and goes out.)

It was you, Edmund, who sent the flowers! You remembered my birthday!

IFFLEY

Remembered!

CLORA

And it was to prevent embarrassing me — and

Tony—that you stayed my hand! For what I said, I'm humbly sorry!

(Reflecting.)

But how did you happen to send just three?

IFFLEY

If you insist on sordid details—it was all I had money for, with the half crown for the man.

CLORA

And I was writing to thank Tony!

(She rises and laughs harshly.)

IFFLEY

What's the matter? Don't! Don't!

CLORA

(Hysterically.)

Husband! *Husband!*

IFFLEY

Good God, if I were!

(He takes her in his arms.)

CLORA

No!

(She struggles free.)

Leave me. Go!

IFFLEY

(Standing away from her.)

Go — where? To the devil, where I belong!

(Enter Randall.)

RANDALL

Dinner is served, madam.

(Exit.)

IFFLEY

Good-night.

CLORA

(Observing his clothes.)

You 're not dining out?

IFFLEY

I telephoned that I was ill.

CLORA

Telephone that you 're better, and they 'll wait.

IFFLEY

I could n't go now — meet people — *now!* What do you think a man is made of! It would drive me — off the sprinklin' cart.

CLORA

But where *will* you dine?

IFFLEY

At the club.

CLORA

Ah! And — the water wagon?

(On a sudden resolution.)

No! Stay with me. I ordered dinner for two.

(She takes a rose, and breaking the stem puts it in his lapel.)

IFFLEY

(Misunderstanding her, looks at her with a deep gleam in his eye.)

I love you.

(He takes her by the shoulders.)

I love you.

CLORA

(Adroitly evading him.)

No, no, child!

(Holding up both palms.)

All gone. All gone!

(Iffley follows and catches her firmly in his arms.)

CLORA

No! No!

(She throws her head back from him.)

IFFLEY

(His voice vibrating with passion and with command.)

You wonderful girl, what have you done to me!
Good God, say that you love me! Say it, or I'll
crush the life out of you!

(She gives a little, stifled cry of pain. He kisses her full upon the lips. Her head sinks upon his shoulder.)

CURTAIN

ACT II



ACT II

SCENE : — *Mrs. Wayne's drawing-room. An air of luxury, in striking contrast with the simplicity of Wayne's study. The furniture is Louis XV gilded. On the lower left a table is set for tea. The walls are of crimson brocade. A low bookcase is filled with a variety of handsomely bound books. The apartment occupies the full width of the second story front of a rather small modern city dwelling.*

DISCOVERED : — *Sally, at the tea table, dealing the cards for Canfield.*

SALLY

(With solemn disgust.)

Did you ever see such a rotten layout !

(Enter Mrs. Jones, announced by Randall. She is seventy, and dressed in black silk and lace, but with more than a touch of coquetry and smartness. She has the conventionally audacious sense of humor, but her manner reveals dignity and sweetness of character.)

SALLY

Hello, grandmem ! These cards come worse every time. I owe Mr. Canfield eleven hundred dollars. Lucky he does n't know it — for his own peace of mind ! Will you have tea ?

(She lights a lamp beneath the kettle.)

MRS. JONES

Solitaire at tea ?

SALLY

Nobody ever comes.

MRS. JONES

Wait till you 're married.

SALLY

(In mock despair.)

How shall I ever *be* married, if nobody ever comes ?

MRS. JONES

You have no savoir faire. I made your grandfather take me out skating on the mill-pond. I fell in, and he had to carry me bodily home. I froze both feet and an elbow.

(*Nibbling a crumpet.*)

But for once in his life your dear grandfather thawed.

SALLY

Maysie-mem !

(*Mock tragically.*)

In Central Park they keep you off till the ice is solid as a cellar floor.

MRS. JONES

This unnatural modern life in cities !

(*Demurely.*)

But Clara's young men — she can't want them all ?

SALLY

There are n't any more — since Lord Iffley . . .
Not that I want them.

MRS. JONES

Not want to be married !

SALLY

Of course I do. But not that kind.

MRS. JONES

What kind?

SALLY

Men who hang about married women — mere poachers, paper sports. If one of them found himself caring for a girl he might have to marry, and pay her bills, he 'd have heart failure.

MRS. JONES

You are judging by Lord Iffley?

SALLY

Strangely enough, no ! He 's a man — dangerous.

MRS. JONES

(Eyeing her narrowly.)

Dangerous — to you?

SALLY

(Laughing.)

Little mouse Sally — can you see me as Her Ladyship?

MRS. JONES

Why not? He's neglecting Miss Schuyler dreadfully.

SALLY

Maysie! Ask your elder grand-daughter.

(Enter Mrs. Denton, announced.)

MRS. JONES

How is that dear genius of a husband of yours?

MRS. DENTON

Don't remind me! Laid up with grip and a raging fever. Worry and overwork! Poor boy, his whole heart is in a great canvas he's blocked out.

SALLY

(Interested.)

He has such wonderful ideas! Some day you'll wake up to find yourself the wife of a great, *great* painter!

MRS. DENTON

He's had to put by all serious work for six months

— to do illustrations. Last night he went quite off his head — imagined the dear little grip microbes were duns, digging at his temples to get away his brains. At midnight he woke me up and told me that a subway express, full of strap-hanging microbes, was roaring up his spinal column and crashing into his brains at the Grand Central Station. It's all my fault.

MRS. JONES

Your fault?

MRS. DENTON

The mortgage on the house.

MRS. JONES

(Sympathetically.)

Too bad. But never let him forget, dear, how lucky he is — that he has *you*!

MRS. DENTON

(Dejectedly.)

When he sees me, he only worries harder. And I can't afford to go away.

(Lightly, but by no means flippantly.)

When other men are sick, the doctors send their wives to Atlantic City — for the dear fellows' health.

SALLY

(Sincerely.)

Oh, I *am* sorry !

MRS. JONES

(Taking Mrs. Denton's hand.)

Don't mind the duns.

(With motherly benignity.)

If one paid them, how would the poor fellows get any work? Not to pay them is a duty we owe to the unemployed.

MRS. DENTON

(With forced gayety.)

At least Archie has the new house to be laid up in. The artistic temperament is *so* sensitive to environment. If he were as sick as he is, in our shabby old studio flat — it would make him fairly ill!

SALLY

(*With serio-comic solicitude.*)

Oh, I *hope* Archie understands that.

MRS. DENTON

I explained it last night. He saw the point at once — his mind was so active — and fell into a deep sleep.

SALLY

(*Mock coyly.*)

Nobody asks me about Alfonso.

MRS. DENTON

I forgot! He has appendicitis?

SALLY

(*Solemnly.*)

It was n't his appendix at all, the doctor said — only his table of contents.

MRS. DENTON

So Alfonso has a less abundant table.

SALLY

Precisely. But he's developed pinkeye. He says he caught it for my sake. We've been married ten years, but with his pinkeye he still sees me *couleur de rose*.

MRS. DENTON

No husband should be without it! Tony, for example. Those awful articles — the papers are full of them.

SALLY

Somebody ought to *speak* to Clara.

(*To Mrs. Denton.*)

Why not you?

MRS. DENTON

I spoke — yesterday.

(*Shrugs her shoulders.*)

SALLY

(*To her grandmother.*)

Isn't it up to you, Maysie?

MRS. JONES

I can't pretend to superior virtue. Long past Clora's age I was doing the same. Your grandfather was a sensible dear — said it did him good to be spelled. Besides,

(*With half-conscious vanity*)

Clora would only think I wanted Lord Iffley myself.

SALLY

But for Tony's sake —

MRS. JONES

It's Tony's *fault*! If you speak to any one, speak to Tony.

SALLY

Maysie, you are an ancient reprobate.

MRS. JONES

Hoity-toity! Did Tony ever share his life with Clora — make her his comrade?

SALLY

He took her among his people — in the Ghetto. She bossed them within an inch of their lives — tried to improve their manners! The only result was that she herself began doing *so*!

(A flicker of her palm beneath her chin.)

MRS. JONES

At least she could help him with politicians.

SALLY

He asked her to. She tried to force afternoon tea on them. Beyond certain limits, even a politician won't be bossed. Tea! They refused to be water-logged.

MRS. JONES

Why did n't he ask them to dinner?

SALLY

He did. She overawed them so, with her low gowns and her air of high life, that they ate on the sly — as if they were stuffing ballot-boxes.

MRS. JONES

(*Philosophically.*)

American life ! It is hardest of all on women — who stand for culture.

SALLY

American life? Culture? If Clora had children — she's simply eaten up with the maternal instinct!

MRS. JONES

Clora?

SALLY

That's why she bosses every one. If she had a nursery to run, she'd let up on Tony.

(*Demurely.*)

Now Alfonso and I . . . You know we're expect —

MRS. JONES

Sally!! You're positively Mid-Victorian. You remind me of my greenest girlhood. Listen. Once, on a park bench, a man spoke to me . . .

SALLY

Maysie! *You are fin de siècle!*

MRS. JONES

Alas! This was no *affaire du cœur*. A poor, wretched fellow. His wife, the mother of his eight children, had eloped with the plumber. "Now you'd think that would have satisfied her," he said, "eight children!" I told him no, not for a minute. She was a woman, and what a woman wants is love.

(Enter Philip Roberts. He greets Sally heartily and kisses Mrs. Jones.)

PHILIP

I'm lucky to find you all. Before any one comes in — that rotten article yesterday! Some anonymous blackguard has reprinted it, and is sending it by the thousand to every voter on the East Side.

MRS. JONES

It's too absurd! What have Muriel Schuyler and her sprig of nobility to do with politics!

PHILIP

Nothing at all — except everything. That article

cuts both ways. Decent people are shocked at what it says about Clora. The socialists are calling Tony the title-hunting democrat, the Shadchen of swollen fortunes. Tammany says that to win now will be taking candy from a kid.

SALLY

And Clora still sees Lord Iffley! Somebody *must* pull her up!

MRS. DENTON

As Tony's partner and friend, why not you?

PHILIP

Hardly a man's work.

(Enter Miss Schuyler. An embarrassed pause.)

SALLY

(Greeting her.)

We were just talking of you — that is, of Clora.

MISS SCHUYLER

(Relieved.)

Yes! It was about that I came.

MRS. DENTON

(To Sally and Mrs. Jones.)

I must run along.

MISS SCHUYLER

Could you wait a moment? Perhaps you could advise us. A reporter forced his way into the house. I overheard him.

(Embarrassed.)

It's *too* dreadful.

(Philip moves away.)

Philip, please stay!

(Philip returns.)

Something *must* be done!

SALLY

I seem to have heard that sentiment before.

MISS SCHUYLER

Last night, after midnight but before Mr. Wayne came in, the reporter saw Lord Iffley leaving here.

MRS. JONES

Really, I'm surprised at Clora.

PHILIP

It simply is n't true! *That's* a lie they won't dare to print!

MISS SCHUYLER

I think it *may* be true.

SALLY

(*Sharply.*)

Miss Schuyler!

MISS SCHUYLER

Oh, no! Not *that*! Yesterday Mrs. Wayne and I had a long talk — about the marriage. She spoke to me as no one else ever has — like a sister, a good girl friend. She would n't advise me; but I'm sure that last night she was talking matters over with Lord Iffley.

MRS. JONES

Certainly. We must assume that.

MISS SCHUYLER

Mr. Wayne has always been against — what mother wants. I simply can't let them suffer. So I told the reporter how good they have been. He was horrid — said that was the campaign story, but would n't go down with the people.

PHILIP

Gossiping cats !

MISS SCHUYLER

The reporter said it was known I had publicly cut Mrs. Wayne.

PHILIP

The tom-cats are worst !

MISS SCHUYLER

(Faintly smiling.)

Thank you, Philip. My answer was to come to call on Clorinda.

PHILIP

You are a sportsman, Muriel — an eternal corker !

SALLY

We little mice were just discussing which would
bell the cat.

(Kissing her.)

You have done it!

*(Enter Clora and Lord Iffley. Miss Schuyler is about
to kiss Clora.)*

CLORA

(Draws back, but speaks with enthusiasm.)

It was *darling* of you to come! The reporter has
followed your car.

SALLY

And has seen *you* again with Lord Iffley!

IFFLEY

It was really rippin', Miss Schuyler — Muriel!

MISS SCHUYLER

(Coldly.)

Thank you, Edmund — Lord Iffley.

IFFLEY

When you go it would help, would n't it, if I were to appear out there — put you in your car?

MISS SCHUYLER

(Significantly.)

I'm a little puzzled about the etiquette in such matters. We might refer that also to your lawyer.

IFFLEY

(Angrily.)

Miss Schuyler!

(Miss Schuyler turns away and sits with Philip.)

IFFLEY

(Turning to Sally to cover the snub.)

A cup of tea? And how is your dear husband — Alfonso?

SALLY

(Significantly.)

Faithful and true, Lord Iffley. Faithful and true.

IFFLEY

(Offended.)

Oh!

(He takes his cup and sits beside Mrs. Jones, who engages him in conversation.)

CLORA

(To Mrs. Denton.)

The article you proposed — Lord Iffley has no objection if Miss Schuyler has none.

(To Miss Schuyler.)

Mrs. Denton says it would make *all* the difference to Tony if she described in the papers what happened yesterday — how Tony entertained you here. You understand — a sop to the pee-pul.

MISS SCHUYLER

Gladly — if it would help!

MRS. DENTON

(To Clora.)

The whole matter hinges on making Tony out a real democrat. May I put in the shirtsleeves?

CLORA

Paint him, if you will, as a *sans culotte* ! He *would* go without trousers, if it weren't for the police.

MRS. DENTON

And may I add what has happened here just now?

CLORA

Just now?

MRS. DENTON

The gossip — *you* know — contrasted with the truth.

CLORA

Contrasted with the truth. Oh, yes !

MRS. DENTON

The whole affair will become ridiculous. The best way to win the public is to make it laugh.

(Low, but with deep rejoicing.)

You know, dear, what this means to me : interest on the mortgage, bills — everything ! You would n't believe what they pay for a beat like this. And

Archie is so sick, so worried! In another moment I shall be weeping on your neck!

(Exit.)

PHILIP

(To Miss Schuyler.)

You have been magnificent, but — your motor is outside, champing its bit.

MISS SCHUYLER

Will you take me out?

(They start.)

CLORA

(Abruptly.)

The reporter is still there. Lord Iffley will go home with you — and mother for chaperone.

MRS. JONES

Surely!

MISS SCHUYLER

Would n't that look too much like what it is — a put-up game? But if Lord Iffley will go as far as the car —

CLORA

(Persistently.)

I think my plan better —

(Miss Schuyler does not answer Clora, but goes out with Mrs. Jones, Philip, and Lord Iffley.)

SALLY

(Her forearms on Clora's shoulder.)

Sister, sister ! What does it mean !

CLORA

(Half to herself, as if under a strong spell.)

For the first time in my life I am really happy !

SALLY

I was thinking of Lord Iffley.

CLORA

And what of him ?

SALLY

He's a simple, manly boy. You're making him desperately *unhappy* !

CLORA

On my life, you are jealous!

SALLY

Clora! Don't be mad. Think, dear—think!

(Reënter Iffley.)

CLORA

You let Miss Schuyler go — with Philip!

IFFLEY

It *was* a dilemma. But she grasped it by the horns. She introduced the reporter to us all, then took him in the car — left us all flabbergasted on the curb. You should have seen the fellow! Looked as if a princess had chosen him at drop-the-handkerchief. He'll write what *she* tells him, all right! She's got him in her little pocket. By Jove, that girl *is* a ripper.

CLORA

You are finding that out? Then, if you are wise, you will follow her.

SALLY

*(At the door.)*Now, Clara, you are *thinking*!*(Exit.)*

CLORA

Believe me — before it is too late.

IFFLEY

(Hurt.)

You advise this — now!

CLORA

It is now for you or never. She has *all* but broken the engagement.

IFFLEY

I will see that she does break it, this very night. That's only square to *her*.

CLORA

You know what Muriel is. Coves like you, you say, are always marrying money. The thing that still may be yours—have you ever imagined anything more perfect?

IFFLEY

Imagined! I *know* it. You, Clorinda — you! You buck a felleh up to all that's best in him, and stand there beside him, his comrade.

CLORA

(*Resolutely.*)

Muriel is that — much more.

IFFLEY

You *say* so. And if she were — to go to her, now! It would be false to myself, false to you, too, Clorinda — falsest of all to her.

CLORA

And with me, is there no falsehood, no deceit?

IFFLEY

Say the word, and, by heaven, there shall be none! I still have the Manor shoot and two thousand pounds a year. There we can live our best lives, in frankness and honor to each other.

CLORA

And have you *no* regret?

IFFLEY

Not one!

CLORA

Remember! If this is the real world, and no fool's paradise, we shall look at everything squarely. Scandal, an American divorce, remarriage — just what will it mean in England?

IFFLEY

Happiness! Happiness! And again happiness!

CLORA

But politics — your career! You are “fearfully keen about the Empire.”

IFFLEY

Without money?

CLORA

That is bad. But there 's still what you call huntin'!

IFFLEY

My pious uncle and cousin might not ask us to subscribe to the hunt.

(*Smiling.*)

It would n't matter. We could n't afford that either.

CLORA

But if they cut you, the whole county would follow them! We should be thrown back on ourselves — on the gentry who marry chorus girls.

IFFLEY

For myself, I had n't even thought of it. The world and its ways are nothin', now I have you! But you would find it hard. *You* have thought of that?

CLORA

I have *thought* of it.

IFFLEY

(*Anxiously.*)

And thinking — you have been unhappy?

CLORA

(Abstracted, exalted.)

I have been living in a new world. But it is the *real* world — the world of freedom!

IFFLEY

Of freedom? All afternoon, beneath our happiness, I have felt somethin' sad — an undertone! You don't doubt me — my love?

CLORA

(With a little start.)

A man is always to be doubted. Yet, Edmund, to this moment I had forgotten even that! And I don't doubt you now.

IFFLEY

Yet there's been somethin'! Tell me. As our love is to be honest and free, tell me!

CLORA

(Simply.)

The undertone. To-day as we rode up the Avenue,

through the park, my hand was in yours ; my heart was in yours. In my soul was the spirit of freedom ! Yet, through my veil, through the half-shaded windows, I saw the streets I love so well ; the rocks and the grass ; the gay autumn trees beneath the sparkling sky ; the old friends who passed us unheeding. All I have been was there ; till to-day all I had hoped for. It was as if my lost girlhood looked in at the window, weeping in the beautiful sunlight. All day it has been crying out to me, dumbly, *farewell!*

IFFLEY

(*Sadly.*)

And you regret it.

CLORA

(*Bravely.*)

No ! After all, it is the little conventional world I am leaving. In my deepest spirit I have not one regret ! I am free, free, free ! Yet that word, farewell, has been sounding in my heart. You don't understand ? Listen ! As a child I was a prisoner — in the nursery, with my playthings. The world

of the young girl called me — the world of freedom. I put away my playthings. Yet as I did so, I cried over each one. I have them upstairs in an old trunk ; you shall see them. When you came, again I was a prisoner. Life had closed round about me ; stone walls and iron bars. To-day I have put by my later dolls. Always, Edmund, *always* they will be there, laid away in the darkness of my heart. And always they will be wet with tears. But now as then I follow the call of freedom — without regret. Edmund, I love you, love you, love you !

(He reaches out to her. She throws wide her arms. He embraces her.)

IFFLEY

I pray God I may prove worthy of such love !

CLORA

(Standing apart from him, archly.)

Do you doubt it ?

IFFLEY

(After a slight pause.)

No.

CLORA

(Detecting the pause.)

You do doubt it! I feel it—you too have the undertone! Truth for truth, Edmund! To be silent now is to lie to me!

IFFLEY

(Hesitates a moment.)

Tony Wayne is the salt of the earth. I have been—I am—his guest. I don't like the trick we're playin' him.

CLORA

The trick *we* are playing him?

IFFLEY

Being the girl you are, you must have thought of that.

CLORA

What *I* am doing—yes! But you! What *you* are doing to Tony—always you will think of our love as . . . something black, revolting? The truth! Up to now, you have been honor itself.

IFFLEY

Then why distrust me?

CLORA

(In sudden illumination.)

Great heaven, it is *because* of your honor I distrust you!

(He grasps her by both hands to draw her to him; but with impulsive strength she throws him off.)

CLORA

No. I must *think*!

IFFLEY

(Reaching out both hands.)

Clorinda — love!

CLORA

(Hesitates; then quickly presses the bell.)

No! Leave me!

IFFLEY

Order *me* out! *Clorinda*! If we have misgivings *now*, how shall we be brave in the years to come!

CLORA

That is the question. I must think — think !

(Enter Randall.)

RANDALL

Miss Levine to see *you*, madam.

CLORA

Show Lord Iffley out.

IFFLEY

(Standing erect, as one used to command.)

I shall be back before the hour is past.

(To Randall, who has started to go out.)

Then you will admit me.

(To Clora, low but firmly.)

And you will give me your answer — then or never.
If you love me, you will come !

(Enter Miss Levine. She steps aside at the door as Iffley passes and looks him up and down. Randall announces her, and follows Iffley out.)

CLORA

(Vexed.)

You should have waited below.

MISS LEVINE

I am assigned to interview you.

(Shows a circular.)

The scandal of yesterday, reprinted. On the East Side the streets are littered with them. Seeing what I have seen, I need scarcely ask you if it is true.

CLORA

(In sudden anger.)

You will ask me nothing!

(She presses the electric button.)

MISS LEVINE

Oh, you will have the butler show me the door! It is not I who have insulted you, but your own deeds — something in your heart that is black and nauseous.

CLORA

(Pauses, reflecting.)

If the thing you imagine were true,

*(Acidly)*I should want above all people to know what *you* think of it.

MISS LEVINE

You mean about that man, about my child ! I will tell you !

CLORA

Confine ourselves to *that man* —*(A slightly ironic accent.)*Your *husband* — *Miss* Levine.

MISS LEVINE

He was n't my husband. And don't call me *Miss* !

CLORA

You are known as . . . ?

MISS LEVINE

My friends of the Advance call me Comrade Levine.

CLORA

Oh ! Comrade ?

MISS LEVINE

(Hotly.)

With regard to *those men*, even you can call me comrade.

(Enter Randall.)

CLORA

(Hesitates, looking from one to the other; then)

Never mind, Randall.

RANDALL

Mr. Wayne would like to see you, madam.

CLORA

In a moment I shall want to see him.

(Exit Randall.)

CLORA

(To Miss Levine.)

Does *that man* still call you comrade ?

MISS LEVINE

(In anger, as if hit by a blow.)

None of your business !

CLORA

But it is my business — precisely ! Has he never said that there is, in *your* heart, something . . . nauseous ?

MISS LEVINE

Ah ! Mr. Wayne — you are thinking of leaving him !

CLORA

(Starts, but controls herself and smiles sardonically.)

Comrade, I am. You offer me the right hand of fellowship ?

(She clasps her hands behind her back, however.)

MISS LEVINE

You women — I *marvel* at your frivolity, your madness ! In all the long history of the world, your men were the first to build an enduring democracy. Out of the wilderness they have created wealth by

millions of millions. Out of primitive settlers and ignorant immigrants, they have made the most widely educated nation in the world, and the happiest. In science, literature, and art they are taking their place among the foremost.

CLORA

(Ironically.)

I gather that you admire American men?

MISS LEVINE

Socially they are still, so to speak, in their shirt-sleeves . . .

CLORA

That, at least, is true.

MISS LEVINE

The labors of Hercules were not performed in a dress suit.

CLORA

The costume of the Demigod, if I can believe the ancient Sculptors, was very negligée. He must have been a trial to his wife.

MISS LEVINE

At least she knew him for a Demigod! You hold your man by no power of high passion — only by his own mistaken fidelity.

CLORA

Mistaken?

MISS LEVINE

For what are you? You are a vampire!

CLORA

(With mock resignation.)

I am a rag and a bone and a hank of hair.

MISS LEVINE

Worse!

CLORA

Oh!

(Ironically.)

I beg pardon if I have presumed.

MISS LEVINE

It was a fool who made his prayer to that vampire. Your man is a man of genius. The mark he should make with his life would endure for ages — forever! His children and his children's children should replenish the earth with virtue and power. Yet he has given himself to you; and, secure in his misplaced fidelity, you are draining his last drop of blood.

CLORA

You are frightfully melodramatic. Yet you set me thinking!

MISS LEVINE

Now you turn to another.

CLORA

As *you* did — which is why I am so interested.

MISS LEVINE

Not as I did! The moment I ceased to love that man, I left him, forever. Paugh! To those who love truly there is only one adultery — to turn from

the free kiss of a lover to the enforced embrace of a husband !

CLORA

Miss Levine !

(Controlling herself.)

I find myself always crying "Miss Levine !" when I am most deeply interested. But you *do* think so clearly ! Tell me — if I leave the man who has been so true to me, won't there be in my heart, as you say, something nauseous ?

MISS LEVINE

Every soul is its own — its only master ; follow it wholly, and you will be wholly free.

CLORA

Even if I have done wrong ?

MISS LEVINE

Every great right is some one's little wrong. It has been said : Strong men digest their sins.

CLORA

An attractive idea. It explains why they tend to grow fat.

(*Earnestly.*)

Are you sure I should n't endanger my figure?
And they — do they also digest *our* sins?

MISS LEVINE

For them as for us, the only truth is freedom. When he is giving his whole heart to the work he was born for, he will bless you from the depths of his soul.

CLORA

I believe you are right. And I have news. You may say Miss Schuyler has broken her engagement with Lord Iffley.

MISS LEVINE

This is due to Mr. Wayne's intervention?

CLORA

(*Smiling.*)

And somewhat also to mine!

MISS LEVINE

(*Ironically.*)

I will say so!

(*Seriously.*)

Why, then,

(*Taking the circular from her muff*)

that gives the lie to all this — as far as he is concerned.

(*They shake hands, and Miss Levine goes out.*)

CLORA

(*Pauses, suddenly serious ; then calls down the hall.*)

Tony !

WAYNE

(*Without.*)

All right !

(*Enter Wayne.*)

Miss Levine has been giving you a wiggling ?

CLORA

Simple hints for daily needs. Now I know why the truth is called naked ! I wonder if you agree with her ?

WAYNE

My managers have been giving *me* a wiggling.

Clora, dear, I need hardly tell you that I trust you. . . .

CLORA

True ; you have n't bothered your head about me.

WAYNE

Yet I insist you shall not see Iffley again.

CLORA

He is coming this afternoon.

WAYNE

You must tell Randall to send him away.

CLORA

I will *not* !

WAYNE

(*Gently.*)

Always I have given you your way. See what you have done !

CLORA

(*Interested.*)

What have I done ?

WAYNE

(Gently reproachful.)

You have made me a public laughing-stock, ruined my career, perhaps.

CLORA

You do agree ! I have thwarted the labors of Hercules, the Demigod.

WAYNE

(Patiently.)

Let 's stick to the simple truth — it 's bad enough.

CLORA

I am a vampire — sucking the last drop of your blood.

WAYNE

(With a sorry laugh.)

What 's this, Clora ! You melodramatic?

CLORA

A touch of your own dear Bowery.

WAYNE

Be frank and true with me. You will see I am right about Iffley.

CLORA

(With sudden resolution.)

I *will* be frank and true! I love Lord Iffley; he loves me.

WAYNE

(After a start.)

Nonsense! This is another of your exaggerations.

CLORA

It is true.

WAYNE

(Incredulous; placing his hands on her shoulders.)

You!

CLORA

(Evading him.)

Don't touch me!

WAYNE

(With deeply wounded affection.)

You — unfaithful!

CLORA

Yes.

WAYNE

(With dawning abhorrence.)

How long has this been true?

CLORA

It seems forever.

WAYNE

(Relieved.)

Ah! What you speak of has a very particular time and place. This is another of your new touches of melodrama!

CLORA

Last night, then.

WAYNE

(Trembling with sudden rage, grasps her by the neck.)

You brazen harlot! You stand there coldly and tell me this with a sneer!

CLORA

(Quivering in his grasp.)

Oh! Oh!

WAYNE

(Releasing her.)

No! I am wrong.

(Pause.)

Forgive me — what I said and what I did. I was not myself — the victim of a reflex action.

CLORA

(Throwing on the table her necklace, which his grasp has broken.)

I was the victim. And what is a reflex action?

WAYNE

(Sardonically.)

An action one takes *without* reflection.

CLORA

And now that you *have* reflected?

WAYNE

(With conviction.)

What you say is not true.

CLORA

(Laughing harshly.)

Your reflex actions are not nice; but they do your intelligence more credit!

WAYNE

(Firmly.)

I have reasons.

CLORA

You are a lawyer. You have reasons for everything — and the best reasons when you are most wrong.

WAYNE

(Quietly.)

Do you remember the months we were engaged?

CLORA

This is unheard of!

WAYNE

It was the presidential year.

(Tenderly.)

Always you wore your old mink coat, with a bunch of my violets. We watched for the returns together —

on the roof outside your sky cottage ! To this day, when I smell the mingled odor of fur and violets — on the avenue, on Broadway at matinée time — I remember those days, up there alone in the sky together. And you, when we catch the old perfume — tears come to your eyes.

CLORA

It's not true !

WAYNE

I've seen you — within the year ! The old fur coat, and the last bunch of violets — we laid them away together in the trunk upstairs. When you can go to the trunk room and repeat what you have said —

(He smiles with confidence, reaching out his hand)

I shall believe you.

CLORA

(With violence, as if at bay.)

I refuse to take part in absurd mummmery. Really — !

WAYNE

I have heard you cry wolf before.

(Turning to the bookcase.)

Did it ever occur to you that this is the perfect image of your life?

CLORA

Tony, if you were n't pitiful, I should find you provoking!

WAYNE

Listen. Here is a shelf of the dear poets. The erotic Swinburne, the morbid Verlaine, the lurid Baudelaire. Each volume bears the initials of the giver, on an obscure beloved page. They were given you the first year we were married — by a soulful sophomore who called you his Lady of Pain. Because of you he flunked his exams, and was put to work by an irate parent. He is now leading a double life — on fifteen dollars a week.

CLORA

(Relapsing into her wifely manner.)

Tony Wayne, you are mad as your great grand-sire!

WAYNE

(Unmoved.)

Here are the modern French dramatists — given by an aspiring playwright who used to prove that

we have no drama because American women are sexless. He intimated a desire to have you collaborate with him to elevate the stage.

CLORA

I admit, I escaped that blandishment.

WAYNE

On every shelf it's the same.

(Indicating various sections.)

Evolution ; Abnormal Psychology ; The World's Great Religions ; bugs and insects ; Richard Wagner. Is there one volume which you bought yourself, or which represents any interest of your own?

CLORA

Mad Anthony Wayne ! What has that to do —

WAYNE

You accuse me of not sharing your intellectual interests.

(Smiling.)

I'm only proving you have n't any. Every bit of your reading has been personally conducted. You

think the thoughts of the last person who has talked to you. You are the Cook's tourist of culture !

CLORA

I *like* your arrogance !

WAYNE

Don't take it personally. Ninety-nine women out of a hundred are the same. And the hundredth is generally a man. I shall begin to take notice of their intellects when they no longer wear gowns that button up the back.

CLORA

As a husband, you certainly are a masterpiece ! I tell you I have been unfaithful, and you answer with a dissertation on the female intellect.

WAYNE

The point is that you have *not* been unfaithful. Did you ever reflect that in all these books there is not one that refers to me ?

CLORA

Momentous conclusion ! Your interests are all too stupid !

WAYNE

(Lightly, but with deep seriousness.)

They are—in comparison with me, and our life together. Each and every best-young-man you have compared to me, to my disadvantage—raised the cry of wolf, as you raise it now. One by one they have gone, and I still guard my sheep.

CLORA

(Ironic; bridling.)

Your sheep!

WAYNE

Really, Clora, when you see all this, does n't it make you just a little sheepish? Will you never learn? To any woman, all literature, all art—the whole world of ideas and of ideals—is flat and unprofitable, compared to real life with the man she loves.

CLORA

With each of your lawyer-like reasons, you are only pleading my cause! How have I had time for
(A gesture)

all this? Because I have had *no* real life with *you*!
(Laughing bitterly.)

Since I must convince you by argument—Great Heaven!—do you find any book that relates to Lord Iffley? Is it ideas I have got from *him*?

WAYNE

(Lowering at first, then brightening.)

Yes!

(Going to the bottom shelf.)

I was looking up a quotation from Wagner; hidden behind here I found Burke's Peerage.

(Producing it.)

The peerage is scarcely an *intellectual* interest. But it is weighty. This has been a great comfort.

CLORA

(A touch of gentleness.)

It has pleased heaven, Tony, to dull the shock to you by your own stark, raving madness. Yet you must face the truth. I have been untrue to you as never before.

WAYNE

(Lowers upon her.)

Speak plainly! You have betrayed me!

CLORA

(After a pause.)

Not yet, but —

WAYNE

But *what* !

CLORA

You will regard me as no longer your wife.

WAYNE

(His face contracting to intense rage.)

Clora !

CLORA

(Shrinking from him.)

Tony ! No violence !

WAYNE

(His rage turning slowly to abhorrence.)

There shall be none.

*(Pause.)**(Out of deep-wounded affection.)*Oh, Clora, *what* has come over you !

CLORA

Love — the right to freedom. You have made me a prisoner — the convict of marriage. Love, real love, gives me strength to break the bars.

WAYNE

No, by heaven, *not* real! For *me* your love was real.

CLORA

It might have been — until you became *married*.

WAYNE

(*Bitterly.*)

The truth is, we've never *been* married.

CLORA

(*ICily.*)

You mean I have no children!

WAYNE

(*Wearily.*)

Among many things — yes.

CLORA

(Hotly.)

You have never been able to provide for them !

WAYNE

Once that may have been true. Now it is a lie ! Real love ? In the whole life you are leading, not one moment is real ! The thing that is wrecking our love is nothing but glamour. How can I make you see it ? Every year you spend more than it once cost us both to live — only on gowns and jewels.

CLORA

(Bitterly, sardonically.)

I see your ideal of the American matron — yours and the great Theodore's ! Dowdy Clorinda pointing with pride to a horde of ragamuffins and saying, "These are my diamond necklaces !"

WAYNE

Even that is better than — than the thing you have come to !

CLORA

You want to keep the name of Mad Anthony among the sons of the Revolution.

WAYNE

Our line is far older, yours and mine. You 've read Darwin.

(Glancing toward the bookcase.)

Did the Man from Cook's tell you what *he* says of real love — free love? Up from the first little creature that crawled out of the ooze and the brine of the sea, all our ancestors have loved really and freely. Theirs is the true nobility. Out of infinite joy — yes, and infinite pain — they have created the life of mankind. To do that was the only reality, the only freedom. Yet you, in your vanity, end it all — the increasing triumph of the ages! I am proud of my family, but the children of God I love.

(With intense scorn.)

And to what I love I give my whole heart, my whole life — if need be my happiness.

CLORA

Ah! *Your* happiness! Ha! Magnificent! The life, the happiness, which you propose to sacrifice are *mine!*

WAYNE

No! I propose to make your happiness! In my work, you say, I am having the time of my life. You have been unhappy because you have shirked *your* work. Live your whole life bravely, in every function. Then, in the face of all pain, all hardship, defeat even, you can't be unhappy!

CLORA

(Laughing shrilly.)

You are a work of art, husband, admirable in your perfection.

(With intense bitterness.)

Of all arguments to reclaim the wife who has wronged you — children!

WAYNE

(Lowering upon her.)

Forget the wrong against me. I'll take care of that! Your fatal error is against yourself. What you are is no more shameful than what you *have* been — self-centred, sterile. Always I have felt it in our life, a deep, corroding immorality. If I have

loved you less than I might, that, and only that, is the reason !

CLORA

At last! *Now* you have pleaded my whole cause for me! You are the great American man, creating the great American nation. I am the Vampire, destroying you in every function. Our whole life is immoral. It is! It is! Tony, to this moment, I have had one misgiving. I shrank from any sin against you, from making another share that sin. You yourself have shown me that the only sin would be to remain what is called *true* to you. If I turned from the free kiss of love to the embrace of a husband, *that* would be adultery !

(*A pause. Wayne is speechless.*)

(*Enter Randall.*)

RANDALL

(*With a furtive glance at Wayne.*)

Lord Iffley, madam.

WAYNE

(*Quickly.*)

Bring him up !

(Randall hesitates, looking toward Clora.)

CLORA

No, Randall, no!

WAYNE

Bring him up. Bring him up, I tell you!

(Exit Randall, with a deprecatory look at Clora.)

CLORA

(Alarmed.)

What are you going to do?

WAYNE

I don't know. But by God, I'll do it!

(Enter Lord Iffley. Seeing Wayne, he starts.)

WAYNE

(Calmly in manner, but with intense latent passion.)

Lord Iffley, if there ever was a man and a gentleman, you are. It is a dirty trick you are playing, and a coward's trick. In your heart you know it.

(Pause.)

Do you still ask her to go with you?

IFFLEY

(Resolutely.)

I do.

WAYNE

(Steadying himself on the back of a chair.)

And you?

CLORA

(Facing Wayne.)

I shall go with him.

WAYNE

(An outburst.)

Then get away from me, both of you! Out of my house! This hour the whole world shall see you, smirched with dirt! And you shall see the anger of the world—the blight of free love! Out of my house, I say!

CLORA

(Half shrinks from him, then turns back.)

But, Tony!

(A quick recrudescence of her wifely manner.)

Your campaign! It will ruin you now! Wait! I have managed all that!

WAYNE

(Furiously.)

I've had the last of your managements! Out of my house!

(Proudly he rises to his full height, lifting the chair and holding it lightly suspended.)

Out, I say! *It is best for you!*

(Iffley steps in front of Clara; meets Wayne's glare with dignity; then follows Clara out.)

(Wayne stands rigid a moment, then drops the chair and sinks into another, his features tense and set.)

(In a moment Sally enters. Seeing Wayne, she comes to him with a wondering look. She picks up Clara's necklace from the table.)

SALLY

Clara has gone with Lord Iffley!

(She throws herself on the floor, her head on Wayne's knees.)

(Wayne bursts into convulsive tears.)

CURTAIN



ACT III



ACT III

SCENE : — *The roof of an apartment house, near Madison Square. The part shown is a corner, surrounded by a balustrade, waist-high. To the right, abutting the proscenium arch, is a low hut or cottage of corrugated iron. To the left, also abutting the proscenium arch, is an electric hoarding—a coarse wire net, supporting huge letters, the fronts of which are brilliantly illuminated. The back of the hoarding is to the stage, and only a faint glow indicates the glaring light at the front.*

A door of the cottage gives the only entrance to the stage, though other parts of the roof may be reached around the corner. The cottage window is neatly curtained, and is fronted by a window-box of evergreens. The back of the hoarding is partly screened by a row of tall bay trees. In the centre of the scene is a rug, with easy chairs and a table.

It is night, and the neighboring buildings, far below the level of the roof, are seen in deep shadow, through the openings of the balustrade. In the middle distance is the tower of Madison Square Garden, the belfry outlined in lights. Beyond is the East River, spanned by arches of minute lights, which indicate the Brooklyn and the Williamsburg bridges.

Enter Sally, carrying a tray with a coffee machine, four small cups, and a box of cigarettes. Mrs. Jones and Clara follow. Clara's dress, though neatly cut and tasteful, is rather faded, and of a style long out-moded: it contrasts markedly with the dresses of her mother and sister, which are fresh and modish. Clara wears an old mink coat, Sally sables.

SALLY

(Lights the alcohol lamp and screens it from the air. Then she speaks to an imaginary butler, in the tones of burlesque, but with a touch of acerbity.)

That will do, Randall. We will serve the coffee ourselves.

(She throws back her shoulders slightly, drops her middle fingers to the seams of imaginary trousers, and walks formally toward the door. Then she comes back to the table.)

Much more truly smart, don't you think, to be free of the eternal presence of servants?

CLORA

(With a touch of exasperation.)

If that is a joke, Sally, it has gone far enough. You have given us excellent imitations of cook,

maid, and butler ; but the dinner was as bad as ever we had here in the old days. •

MRS. JONES

I *like* that ! Before you married, you used to call this high life. It's the most luxurious apartment in New York. Who else has a garden terrace in the heart of the shopping district ?

SALLY

(*With a searching glance at Clara.*)

If you don't prefer high life, why have you come back to it ?

CLORA

(*Coldly.*)

I have told you.

MRS. JONES

(*With earnest irony.*)

You have left the house to Tony for his headquarters — to save campaign expenses ! A very good story for the papers, *but* —

SALLY

It has made you out a model wife — coupled with that other story of how you helped Tony to save an American heiress from a ghoulish, fortune-hunting Briton. And you've gone back to wearing your old trousseau things. Why not publish that also as a proof of your devotion to Tony?

CLORA

(Coldly.)

Why not?

SALLY

Why, when you left, was he all broken up? Why does he never come here, and why does Lord Iffley come — for coffee and cigarettes? Why are you always angry when I speak of it?

MRS. JONES

(Severely.)

My child, it's all a pretense — an obvious pretense.

CLORA

(Reflecting a moment.)

Yes. It is.

MRS. JONES

A shameful pretense !

CLORA

Grandmamma !

MRS. JONES

Then why have you not been frank with us?

CLORA

I was afraid the newspapers would ask questions, and I wanted to take the necessary lies on my own shoulders. When I told Tony about — about Lord Iffley, he went into a rage, and turned me out of the house.

SALLY

Ah ! Naturally.

CLORA

He was quite natural. He said the whole world should see me, smirched with dirt.

MRS. JONES

That, my child, is what it will amount to, if . . .

CLORA

(Hotly.)

There is *no* if! That is what we expected — what we still expect. Yet the scandal would have hurt Tony's campaign. He did his best to ruin his last chance. But *I* have managed! Now there is no more need of pretense. Every vote is cast. In an hour we shall know the result.

SALLY

(Pouring the coffee, which is boiling.)

And you, Clora?

CLORA

(Assuming a matter-of fact tone.)

I have engaged my berth to Sioux Falls. I shall marry Edmund and go to England.

SALLY

I knew it!

MRS. JONES

*Clora!**(More and more deeply shocked.)*

I can't *believe* it of you! You, Clora — *you*! Ouff!
It gives me a chill.

(Rising determinedly.)

I'll see you alone to-night. We'll *talk* of this!

CLORA

(Quickly.)

Read me the moral law? I simply won't *have* it!

MRS. JONES

(Sternly.)

You have used me, used your innocent sister, to protect you against scandal. You have made us accomplices in your shame! I will make you acknowledge the insult to both of us, and the sin in your own heart!

(Exit.)

CLORA

(Controlling herself, speaks kindly to Sally.)

Edmund wants you to live with us — as you did with Tony.

SALLY

Will it be just like that?

(She offers Clora the cigarettes.)

They are *de rigueur* — in certain English sets.

CLORA

(Inwardly wincing.)

You mean that decent people there will cut us.

SALLY

Lord Iffley is very kind. But with his *fortune*

(A slightly ironic emphasis)

won't he have his hands full, providing for your simple tastes? Thank you, I will stay with Maysie.

CLORA

(Tenderly.)

Little sister, I want you to understand — I *trust* you to understand! The world is conventional in its judgments, *so* narrow and *so* small! But you are not so. Think, and you will see that what we are doing, Edmund and I, is the big thing, the just thing — the only *right* thing!

SALLY

I think. But I don't see it.

CLORA

Since I don't love Tony, to live with him can be only sinful. He himself saw that! And since I do love Edmund, oh, so deeply, as he loves me, *not* to go with him, whatever it costs us in happiness — don't you see? — it would be cowardice!

SALLY

I am still *thinking*. You took everything from Tony. You took his love — and he loves you very deeply. You took his money, for yourself and for me. To provide for us, he gave up all leisure and enjoyment — became tired and dull. You gave him nothing — nothing but contempt for his dullness. Was that "right"?

CLORA

No. And so I shan't do so any more.

(Gently pleading.)

You will come — let us do what we can for you?

SALLY

Like the world, I'm so narrow and small.

CLORA

Perhaps things won't turn out so badly in England. If we are able — to bring you out properly . . .

SALLY

I have broken Tony's bread and eaten his salt. I can't leave him in the lurch. I shall play the game.

CLORA

(Looking about with unconscious disdain.)

You will stay *here*?

SALLY

(Acidly.)

Our neighbors are housemaids. To receive callers I have the entrance hall and the assistance of bell-hops. Respectability comes high; but we must have it. I'll stick to Alfonso and love in a sky cottage. We're hopelessly conventional, Alfonso and I.

CLORA

(Patting her head patiently.)

Don't be hard on me, Sis . . .

(Sally shrugs her shoulders ; then sits motionless and obdurate. Clara turns from her, offended, and defiantly lights a cigarette. She holds it awkwardly between her thumb and first finger. It goes out. She throws it down.)

Pah !

(She clears the air about her with her handkerchief and sips her coffee.)

SALLY

If you will hold it like a stick of candy !

(She takes the cigarette, presses out the flatness between thumb and finger, taps the end against her thumb-nail, and then, lighting it, leans back and puts her slippered toes against the table-top.)

The latest attitude from Sioux Falls.

(Puffs.)

(A horn toots off stage. Enter Miss Schuyler and Philip Roberts in motoring furs. He has a tin horn and she a feather tickler. The clothes of both are sifted full of variegated tissue-paper confetti.)

(Sally drops her toes from the table, and hides her cigarette.)

MISS SCHUYLER

(Comes impulsively to Clara, suffusing happiness.)

Congratulate us, dearest. We're engaged!

CLORA

Miss Schuyler! Muriel! *When* did this happen?

MISS SCHUYLER

(To Philip.)

When did it happen?

PHILIP

(To Clara.)

How did you come to think of such a question!

(To Muriel.)

In the conservatory, eh?

MISS SCHUYLER

We may as well *call* it then. Mother had been horrid to me — said I'd made her a laughing-stock and myself a scandal. Philip came and was so true and kind that I found myself crying. Then —

(A laugh of happy embarrassment.)

People don't have to *say* such an awful lot, to be engaged.

PHILIP

Fact is, before I knew it, I had got myself horribly compromised.

MISS SCHUYLER

(Thrusting her tickler in his face.)

Philip!

SALLY

(Having joined them.)

I am so glad! Oh, I *am* so glad!

(Impulsively she kisses Miss Schuyler.)

MISS SCHUYLER

(Taking Philip close by the arm.)

We've come to tell you first of all. It was you, dear, who made the match!

CLORA

I! What does your mother say!

MISS SCHUYLER

Mother is at Lakewood. Neurasthenia — otherwise known as exhaustion of the social nerve.

PHILIP

There's another horrible jolt coming to mother. We told Mr. Schuyler. He promised to administer the jolt.

MISS SCHUYLER

And when father does say something, it goes through.

(Philip turns his back and gives a long toot on his horn.)

Dearest, when I came to you that day I was *such* a silly! I knew nothing of life — of its evil or of its good. Of my own heart — of what love should be — I knew nothing at all whatever! You, with your few, dear, sisterly words, told me everything. Oh, yes! I know it all now! I know that life is black, black, black. But I also know that it may be sweet and pure — as it is for you! Clorinda, dearest — may I call you so? — if you *knew* what it has meant to me, will always mean, to know you — your sweetness and goodness!

CLORA

(Without conviction.)

Thank you, Miss Schuyler.

(Forcing the note of conviction.)

Thank you, Muriel.

MISS SCHUYLER

And that brave big husband of yours! Realizing what you have been to me, I know something of what you are to him. You have followed the papers?

CLORA

No. That is, I've only glanced at them.

PHILIP

It's the reporters, dear, who come to her for news.

MISS SCHUYLER

How stupid of me! And what *he* is doing — you hear it all, at once, from him. Will he win? We have gone from bulletin to bulletin — we two together in the limousine.

CLORA

Then you can best tell me.

PHILIP

Even his enemies admit that he's made the closest kind of a fight. The shouting in the street is *all* for Tony. It depends on the effect of these rotten circulars. If people believe Tony's been playing double with rich and poor, he's done for. If they believe the truth, he'll win. And I hope they'll take his word before that of anonymous black-guards.

MISS SCHUYLER

Which *are* they believing? Of course he's had you up on the telephone.

CLORA

No — not yet.

MISS SCHUYLER

He has n't time? Then it *must* be close! It has all been *so* exciting! And his speeches — the way he talks about our country, our people! I had to take two handkerchiefs — just like a perfectly splendid *matinée*. But of course you've heard him!

CLORA

Not in this campaign.

MISS SCHUYLER

He has pathos, passion — even the note of tragedy.
That 's what the paper says !

CLORA

Really, I had n't heard.

MISS SCHUYLER

I suppose he 's too modest to say it himself.

(To Philip.)

Promise me, dear, you 'll never be as modest as
that !

(To Clora.)

But he does tell you how much he owes to you ?

CLORA

No — in the present case.

SALLY

(With sub-acid satire.)

Yet in the present case, Clora, I think you may
admit, without immodesty, that you *have* aroused
his passion and the note of tragedy.

MISS SCHUYLER

(Pauses and looks from Sally to Clara.)

Is there anything wrong?

CLORA

Wrong?

MISS SCHUYLER

You don't seem excited at all. And, when I told my news, your sister kissed me.

CLORA

Dear child, my whole heart goes out to you.

(She kisses her.)

It touches me — I can't tell you how much — to think that *I* have had any part in bringing you such happiness.

(She dashes a tear from her eye, smiling.)

You see, I am not at all as calm as you think.

(Enter Mrs. Denton.)

MRS. DENTON

I've come to interview you, Clara.

CLORA

From the other side, Philip, you can see the tower of the Times. Look for the searchlight. If Tony is elected, it will flash north : if not, south.

(To Sally.)

Do get them away. Edmund will be here . . .

(Philip, Miss Schuyler and Sally pass round the corner of the cottage.)

MRS. DENTON

Listen — and forgive me ! My editor thinks you are going to get a divorce and marry Lord Iffley.

CLORA

(Simply.)

He is mistaken.

MRS. DENTON

May I advise you ? The time is past when the truth can hurt Tony.

CLORA

But if it is n't the truth ?

MRS. DENTON

(Surveying her costume.)

Why have you on that old gown?

CLORA

Why not?

MRS. DENTON

It's years out of fashion — part of your trousseau.

CLORA

(Coldly.)

And what then?

MRS. DENTON

You are the squarest woman I ever knew, Having left Tony, you are too honest — and too proud — to keep wearing the things he paid for.

CLORA

Sherlock Holmes!

(Enter Mrs. Jones carrying a small florist's box. She greets Mrs. Denton and places the box on the table beside Clora.)

Alice is interviewing me, grandmem.

MRS. JONES

*(Significantly.)**I will interview you later.**(Exit.)*

MRS. DENTON

(Taking Clora by the lapel of her coat.)

The old mink, too! *Sally* is wearing the sables
Tony gave her. Where are yours?

(Clora opens the florist's box.)

And violets!

(On a sudden thought.)

If what *you* say is true, Clora dear, they will be
from Tony. How often I've seen you in this coat,
with just such a bunch of his violets! If *I* am right,
they will be from Lord Iffley.

CLORA

(Forcing a smile.)

Sherlock Holmes would be green with envy! Only
this is real life.

MRS. DENTON

Ah, Clora! Listen! This story — if it comes out

late to-night, the election news will crowd it down to half a column. After that — if you let me have it exclusively now — the other papers, out of jealousy, will give it less prominence.

CLORA

(After a pause.)

It's all true.

MRS. DENTON

Tony is to get the divorce?

CLORA

As yet he has no grounds. I shall get it on the ground that he has forbidden me his home — refused support.

(She buttons tight her fur coat.)

At Sioux Falls, do you suppose they all blossom out in their faded trousseaux? It will be a gay life!

(She takes the violets out of the box.)

MRS. DENTON

Furs and violets. How often I've seen you like this with Tony! Oh, Clora! The very perfume should recall you.

CLORA

(Sniffs.)

The fur — camphor. The moth-balls of matrimony!
The violets — are not Tony's violets.

(She puts them back in the box, however.)

(Miss Schuyler, Sally, and Philip reënter. They are in high spirits.)

MISS SCHUYLER

It's as dark there as here.

(Indicating the Garden tower.)

What can be happening! We're off to the bulletins. It's *such* fun! They toot into the car in our ears, tickle our noses! I never dreamed I could be so near so many jolly people! I want to tell them all, brag to them — I *know* their Tony!

(She reaches into the pockets of Philip's overcoat with both hands and showers confetti over Clora.)

To think I ever intended to leave my country for — forever!

(Miss Schuyler and Philip go out. Sally follows.)

MRS. DENTON

Clora, Clora! What *you* are leaving forever! . . .

CLORA

Tony said himself I was ruining his career.

MRS. DENTON

You were. Does it follow that you must ruin his *life*? Tony is suffering—alone. And Miss Levine! He may lose to-night; but he has a future—a great work in the world. And he should do it greatly! But a woman like that would drag him down to her life of the Ghetto! She is following him everywhere. The papers are remarking it—with something between the lines.

CLORA

That's why I stopped reading them.

MRS. DENTON

Then you *do* still care what happens to Tony!

CLORA

In a way, no doubt.

MRS. DENTON

Down deep in your heart, you care!

CLORA

Say I *do* love Tony—love him as I should love a child—a big, helpless boy! What then? He has failed to make me *in* love!

MRS. DENTON

In love? And what *of* it?

CLORA

What of it? All that for years I have hungered for, in a flash it is mine. If you could know him as he is—so light, so gay, so generously devoted; ready to give over the whole great world he lives in, with no regret but for what *I* am losing. Every moment he envelops, suffuses, with his tenderness, his charm. It is a spell, Alice—a spell that will last forever! I shall be everything to him I have not been to Tony.

MRS. DENTON

And what you *have* been to Tony? Do you forget

how we talked — how we felt! — in those old days of furs and violets?

CLORA

(*Wincing.*)

Tony was different!

MRS. DENTON

It is Lord Iffley who is different. That is his one great hold on you — his idle gayety, his charm.

CLORA

At heart he is also a man — honest, intelligent, ambitious!

MRS. DENTON

Yes! But what has it meant to him — being *in* love? Since he has known you he has changed. Look into the sacrifice of his life, and yours, and you will find it shallow enough.

CLORA

His sacrifice — shallow!

MRS. DENTON

He hoped to put so much into his life. Such a

marriage, in England, will put him down and out. He will be just another idle Englishman who has given his manhood for the passion of a moment.

(She lays her palms on Clora's shoulders.)

Forgive me. It is the truth! You will ruin not one man but two. Good-by.

(At the door.)

Oh, Clora!

(Exit.)

(Clora stands at the table, dazed. Mechanically she takes the violets and puts them in her jacket; then, realizing with a start, throws them down.)

(Enter Iffley. He wears a long, light overcoat with a wide, black band on the arm. He is in a breeze of high spirits.)

IFFLEY

(Taking her hands.)

I have been so hungry — out of my senses, almost, with love of you! Every day that brings us nearer doubles up my sufferin' — until, by Jove, I think I should die, if I did n't double up my happiness, too! All day I have felt that I had you tucked

away, warm and throbbin', inside my great-coat. All day I have heard your voice — a song in my heart!

CLORA

I have been needing you as never before — needing your love!

(Deliberately she takes the violets, buries her face in them, and thrusts them into her jacket.)

I thought I was yours already. To-night, in this very last hour, I have sounded depth after depth of surrender.

IFFLEY

(Eagerly.)

Then you *will*! Your ticket — I've arranged the stop-over.

(A gleam in his eye.)

I shall be there before you.

(He seizes her as if to hold her in a long embrace.)

CLORA

(Gently forcing herself apart from him.)

I meant a different surrender.

IFFLEY

But in our hearts we are married already. You promised . . .

CLORA

Since you insisted. But to-night I am facing a bigger, yes, a deeper, a harder surrender. You will have to be very good. They have n't been nice to me.

IFFLEY

They?

CLORA

Every one who knows is against me. And Muriel Schuyler! She kissed me and spoke of my goodness and purity. I had n't had the heart to kiss her! Why could n't I? More than anything else that hurt me. It still hurts! Oh, Edmund! Am I *not* good and pure?

(On a sudden thought.)

She has just gone down. She did n't meet *you here!*

IFFLEY

I only saw Mrs. Denton—and Sally in the telephone booth.

CLORA

Sally?

IFFLEY

The elevator boy said she was calling up Wayne
— for news of the election, he hoped.

CLORA

Sally is bitter — bitter!

IFFLEY

But we have plans for Sally.

CLORA

She has refused to — to be a burden. That is my
one great regret.

IFFLEY

Jove, I'd forgotten!

(He laughs happily.)

I have news, too!

(Indicating the band on his arm.)

CLORA

Bad news!



IFFLEY

(Suffusing exultation.)

That's what kept me so late. The Earl and my cousin are dead.

CLORA

Dead!

IFFLEY

I confirmed it over the cable. The earldom is ours. We're rich beyond the dreams of — of blowin' it in!

CLORA

Dead, Edmund — both of them?

IFFLEY

Cousin let his horse chuck him at a stone fence. Uncle had a weak heart, and the shock carried him off. Perhaps Sally will come with us now, eh?

CLORA

(Shocked.)

But, Edmund! They are your nearest of kin — and dead!

IFFLEY

(Sitting on the table, his arms about her shoulders.)

I know I seem shockin' callous. But they hated me worse than I hated them, and with less cause. Oh,

(Indicating the band on his arm)

I'll do the proper in public. But between ourselves, as you say, the reality of things! You had one great regret; it has vanished! By Jove, when the fellehs see the good sort Sally is, she can bag the man she chooses!

CLORA

But . . . Sally! And if people cut us, how could we bring her out?

IFFLEY

(Still smiling broadly.)

Cut *me*! Not on your little life! You've heard of the divinity that hedges a king? Well, there's a clinkin' high curbstone round an earl. Now I have money and the title, I can do anything I like. Do you know what that uncle of mine did? He was a godly soul, and got the whole country-side singin' psalms through their noses.

CLORA

And we, being quite godless, will create a furore of divorce and remarriage.

IFFLEY

The American idea! Susan falls ; Sioux Falls ; Sue is on her feet again, straight as ever !

(He laughs.)

CLORA

(Earnestly.)

Edmund, the whole situation has become serious.

IFFLEY

(Swinging his leg lightly.)

Serious ! I should say it has !

(Smiling broadly, he takes a large handkerchief with a wide black border, puts it in his outside breast-pocket and taps the corners, which show.)

We agreed to despise what they say — the little conventional world. Now, by Jove, we can *do* it !

CLORA

Little? Ah, it's bigger than I knew ! To-night I

have seen it in my heart — in the hearts of others. Sally won't go with us: I know her. She is loyal to Tony. And living here, how will she ever be married? Our happiness will mean the waste of her life, perhaps. Grandmem has given her whole heart to us, was so *proud* of me! I have robbed her of love and pride — have left her shame and bitterness. Until to-night I have thought only of what *I* am losing — the world *was* little, compared to you! Now I see what I am taking from them, and we are as nothing, you and I.

(Pause. Iffley has become serious.)

And Tony — they say I'm ruining his life. Never forget, Edmund, that once I loved him!

IFFLEY

Good God! Do you think I'm *likely* to forget!

(Facing her with evident suffering.)

What do you mean! Loved him *once*? You love him *still*! The whole world lies open before us, and you talk of — of *him*!

CLORA

Edmund! You — jealous!

IFFLEY

At the thought of — of him, God knows I suffer.

(*With dignity and impetuous honesty.*)

I *am* jealous! And I have cause, if you have *one* regret! Look into your heart, I *beg* you! Don't let our whole life be a torture.

CLORA

(*Bravely and with conviction.*)

No, Edmund. It is fate. Only, all our lives we must remember this: I am bound by a double bond to bring *you* happiness. If ever I find I have not — that I've spoiled your life, too . . . Ah, you see, dear . . .

IFFLEY

If that is all — you are *makin' my* life!

CLORA

(*Brightening.*)

In one respect your news *is* magnificent! The way is open again to your career. You have thought of that?

IFFLEY

(Looks at her a moment, reflecting seriously; then, assuming the note of gayety that at first was natural.)

Career? I did n't know I had any.

CLORA

It is you who said it. You are fearfully keen about the Empire. Think of the position, the influence we shall have! You may be — who knows? — Prime Minister.

IFFLEY

Nonsense! Too much fag. As you say here, nothin' doin'.

CLORA

(Disappointed; vexed.)

In America, we say our "i-n-g."

IFFLEY

(With studious carelessness.)

Since you 're so jolly partic'lar, noth-*ing* do-*ing*!

CLORA

Dear, we *must* be serious.

IFFLEY

Never in my life more serious. Politics ! Have you ever noticed that General Elections have a way of fallin' in the very cream of the huntin' season?

CLORA

But you meant what you said — honestly ?

IFFLEY

(*Seriously.*)

Why, yes. Of course.

CLORA

Then why pretend you are — *shallow* !

IFFLEY

(*Piqued.*)

Eh ! Shallow ?

(*Evasively.*)

Oh, I don't know. A rush of prosperity to the head.

CLORA

Then you *will* think seriously of a career — honor bright ?

IFFLEY

(Tenderly.)

Clorinda, dear! The fact is, I *was* pretendin'. A career is n't possible! Socially anythin' goes — if you have a title, and the money to make it. But — you force me to say it: I must be square with you! Politics is different. The British public is dead set against — you know — the sort of thing we're goin' in for.

CLORA

(Dashed.)

And I meant to be so good for you!

IFFLEY

(Kindly.)

Impossible. I always hate things that are good for me.

CLORA

Ah, Edmund, it is my one regret!

IFFLEY

Nonsense, dear! *I* don't care. Coves like us, you know, with everything in the world to make us

happy — we'd just have to *force* ourselves to be serious.

CLORA

But I *am* serious. I shall do *my* duty.

IFFLEY

Your duty?

(*Interested.*)

You mean — the heir to the earldom?

CLORA

(*Shocked.*)

Edmund! Oh — *oh!* I meant — there are so many ways I have failed Tony. I want to be everything to you I have not been to him.

IFFLEY

(*Still following his own idea.*)

That's jolly fine of you — splendid!

(*On a sudden recollection.*)

But I thought you did n't go in for that sort of thing.

CLORA

You are horribly literal!

(*Piqued at what he has just said.*)

But why should n't I — if, as you say, it's *jolly fine, splendid?*

IFFLEY

(*Uneasily.*)

Well, y' see . . . Why, y' know . . . Hang it, you strike me as the sort of woman that's too fine, too intellectual and all that, to be interfered with, upset . . .

CLORA

(*Still on the defensive.*)

After what you are giving up for me, do you think there's anything I would n't do that was "Jolly fine, splendid!"

IFFLEY

(*Looks at her uneasily, pauses, then again forces the note of carelessness.*)

Duty! Not to *my* title! The first earl, my great grandfather, was a brewer — a rum old sort. You know what they say — the Peerage has become the Beerage! Duty? Why, when Mad Anthony Wayne was fighting us British — and lickin' us,

too! — my illustrious forbear was messin' round his beer vats.

CLORA

(Annoyed, she tucks the corners of his pocket handkerchief out of sight.)

It is *no* pretense. You *are* shallow — vapid.

IFFLEY

(Also annoyed.)

I don't like the way you express yourself. Did you care such an awful lot for Tony Wayne's career, for *his* family?

CLORA

(Excitedly.)

You fling *that* reproach at me — you!

IFFLEY

(Attempting to embrace her.)

Don't, don't! In a moment, good Lord, we shall be quarrelin'.

CLORA

(Angrily; struggling free.)

Don't touch me! Vapid? You are positively inane!

IFFLEY

(Stung to the quick.)

And *you* are a little she devil!

(Controlling himself in a measure.)

Clorinda, dear! Pull yourself in! We 're off on the same sort of go — you know — with *him*!

CLORA

Him? Always him. I forbid you!

IFFLEY

I might have known it! *This is serious!* You have all the charm of the American girl — and her one great foible.

(Friendly, satirical; yet with deep latent seriousness.)

You are a feahful tyrant! You even have a han-kerin' to change my speakin' English. It don't make for happiness — not in the long run, on either side. And *we* 're goin' to be happy.

(Calmly but very firmly.)

Every household has a mistress. But every couple has a master.

CLORA

(With mounting spirit.)

My master! *That's* your idea of real love, free love! Ah, magnificent! Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the wyves!

IFFLEY

The national motto. Rule a wife and *have* a wife.

CLORA

You *are* an Englishman. Always that has been my one regret.

IFFLEY

(Losing his temper.)

Your *one* regret! Already you've told me five of 'em. We've come into an earldom, and you take the hair off my head. You regret everything but your own insensate willfulness.

CLORA

(As if with set teeth.)

Let me tell you, Lord Edmund Cecil Alexander Iffley, Viscount Langdune, and Earl of Hunting-

ton, you are not *my* master! You have n't one decent aspiration. You don't even respect *me*!

IFFLEY

(*Deeply indignant.*)

By Heaven, you are unjust!

CLORA

Then why do you make light of — of my obvious duty! Do you want to make me a traitor to *every* womanly impulse!

IFFLEY

You know why we've quarreled — vulgar middle-class quarrel?

CLORA

Vulgar? Middle class?

IFFLEY

Because I tried not to wound you. But — since you make me! In England I don't know if there *are* such divorces. You remember Stanhope and his American wife? Their children, it turned out, were illegitimate beggars.

CLORA

(Shocked ; deeply wounded.)

Oh! It is true! I'm ruining your life as I ruined Tony's!

IFFLEY

You are talkin' an awful lot of rot in a manner quite excited.

CLORA

(Turning away from him.)

For the first time I see the whole thing clearly! It's all *off* between us! I should ruin you in every manly ambition. You yourself confess it!

(She pauses and faces him, inquiringly. Iffley is embarrassed, silent.)

If there is any other way —

(Coming toward him, appealingly)

tell me?

(She pauses. Reluctantly, Iffley shakes his head.)

What are you thinking? Tell me!

IFFLEY

There is no other way . . .

CLORA

Then it is all off!

IFFLEY

Unless . . . unless we made no pretense of marryin'.

CLORA

How — no pretense?

IFFLEY

The British Public, you know — what it don't know never hurts you.

CLORA

(Mystified.)

You mean a secret marriage?

IFFLEY

(Uneasily.)

Well, as I say, I'm afraid no real marriage is possible. And, anyway, we might n't be able to keep it secret.

CLORA

(Stunned.)

You mean — I'm to live with you . . . *without* . . . !

IFFLEY

Since you insist on my career—it is the only way; but, sweetheart, why insist! *I don't care.*

CLORA

(An outcry.)

Oh, monstrous!

(She strides away from him.)

To live a sneaking life, in fear and shame—your *mistress!*

IFFLEY

Dearest — *dearest!* It's often done — the easiest thing in the world to carry it off! You would go everywhere. I could tell you a dozen people who've done it. Compared to all we've dreamed of, such a life would be freedom itself. Instead of the old shooting-box and two thousand a year, outcast, disclassed — think of it! — wealth, a career, the whole great world!

CLORA

(Striding up and down like a lioness.)

Have your career *without* me! On your ancestral

estate your legal wife, the Countess, and your lordling heirs! You propose that — to *me*! Oh! Oh!

IFFLEY

(Following her up and down with intense indignation.)

I *never* proposed it!

CLORA

Did I propose it? Blackguard!

IFFLEY

No one proposed it! You put the case up to me, and I told you the honest truth. Blackguard? Any other felleh would have sidestepped all that — said nothin', and led you into a fool's paradise. I have been honest with you — showed you the whole truth as it is! And you call me blackguard!

CLORA

But you urged it — pleaded the honorable example of your friends . . . Oh, Edmund! *You*!

IFFLEY

(With increasing indignation.)

I urged nothin'! But you — *you* prate of bein' com-

rades, and when I am frank and square with you, you turn on me like a tiger cat. You live in a hazy dream of self-sacrifice, and when you see the thing we're doin' without blinders, you shy into the ditch. You prattle of free love, of the reality of things. An empty rigamarole! You have as much sense of it all as a mechanical doll squeaking má-ma! *You* advanced? *You* intellectual? You have the intellect of a phonograph!

(Shouting in her ear as she strides away from him.)

Rigamarole! Rigamarole!

CLORA

(Stopping abruptly and facing him.)

I see *the reality of things*. I see it — now! I am to be nothing to you — worse than nothing! But you — *you* are already husband! Rigamarole?

(She laughs bitterly, hysterically.)

Love? *In* love? There's a hoodoo on *me*. Whatever I touch becomes husband — *husband* — HUSBAND!

(She throws herself in the chair and leans on the table.)

In every word you say I hear the voice of Tony Wayne!

IFFLEY

Wayne — Wayne! *Always* Tony Wayne!

CLORA

You do him the honor of being jealous — him!

IFFLEY

And you? Why did you forbid me to speak of him? I know a man when I see one.

(*With deep shame.*)

I — like *him*! I have done him the wrong he *never* would have done — never *could* have. He is a man, and I . . . As you say, I am a blackguard.

CLORA

Then it *is* all off between us!

IFFLEY

(*Stunned; pleading.*)

Clorinda! It *can't* be off!

CLORA

And *why* not?

IFFLEY

You forget our love. And how would you live — with *no* one! I know him. He never will stand for the thing we have done. Come in any way you please — but come you must.

CLORA

You think you have me in your power!

IFFLEY

As you love me, I *have* got you in my power. And as I love you, by Heaven, I'll keep you there!

CLORA

No, Edmund. I have one little virtue — honesty. Free love! It's a castle in the air.

(Looking round at the house and the stars.)

Or rather, a cottage in the sky! *No*, Edmund. For me as for Sally, it is back to the old life here — together.

IFFLEY

You live here — this kennel, this hutch!

CLORA

(Simply.)

Yes, Edmund. This kennel, this hutch.

(A cough is heard within. Sally appears at the door.)

SALLY

Clora, Tony is coming.

CLORA

Here! What does he want?

SALLY

I told him you needed him.

(Coolly.)

You may not know it; but you do, you know.

CLORA

Lord Edmund's uncle and cousin are both dead.

*(Sub-acidly.)**You* might congratulate him.

SALLY

Oh, I *am* sorry! That is, Lord Edmund,

(A quizzical smile)

I'm glad of your good fortune. May I say so?
They were n't your *dearest* friends?

(They go round the corner.)

(Enter Wayne. He faces Clara, haggard, heartsick.)

WAYNE

I am here.

CLORA

(With forced lightness.)

How interesting! So am I.

WAYNE

Then you don't want me! I knew it.

(He turns away.)

CLORA

Tony!

(She starts toward him; he looks over his shoulder.)

I never dreamed what Sally was doing.

(He hesitates a moment, then again walks on.)

But, Tony, now you *are* here . . . they say you
are suffering — on account of me.

WAYNE

(Facing her.)

Not on account of you. On account of another woman —

CLORA

(Ironically.)

Already!

WAYNE

On account of the quite imaginary creature that for five foolish years I thought you!

CLORA

(Dignified, yet with a trace of cajolery.)

Then you did love me — once?

WAYNE

Yes, damn you, I did!

CLORA

(With arch seriousness.)

That *sounds* very ardent. I don't like the way it feels.

WAYNE

Have n't you tortured me enough?

CLORA

It's an old habit—hard to break off, all at once. But I do want to tell you—I'm not going away with Lord Iffley.

WAYNE

(With angry scorn.)

You have betrayed him too—already!

CLORA

No. He has fallen heir to the earldom.

WAYNE

(Sardonically.)

I congratulate you.

CLORA

If you wish. Yet if you don't mind, I won't get the divorce.

WAYNE

(Bitterly.)

It is he who is leaving *you*. You want to come back?

CLORA

(Deeply hurt.)

No, Tony, *no* ! I shall stay here . . .

WAYNE

(Not heeding.)

By Heaven ! The woman who lives with me shall be my wife !

CLORA

Tony ! I haven't asked to — to be that woman.

WAYNE

(With intense bitterness.)

You — a woman ! Once there were women in this land — the wives of strong men, and the mothers. The sons they bore tamed the wilderness, framed the laws of a great nation. In you and the millions like you to-day their spirit is dead. The race of Americans has vanished !

CLORA

(Ironically.)

It *sounds* as if you still cared for me — just as always !

(Seriously.)

Are we as bad as that? The world is so full of people.

WAYNE

But not *our* people!

(Pointing to the distance.)

Down there, in dark alleys and filthy holes, the future of America is teeming. Even to-day they are more American than we are; they have the courage to live their own lives freely, fully, in every function!

CLORA

(A touch of jealous mockery.)

Ah, as I thought. The prolific Levine! I'll get the divorce if you wish. Oh, I foresee Young America! Little, nose-y Tonys, who do *so*!

(A flicker of her palm beneath her chin.)

WAYNE

We do well to mock them: they are our conquerors.

CLORA

(With arch sarcasm.)

They are frightfully immoral. They believe in free love!

WAYNE

A few of them profess to. What difference does that make?

CLORA

It made a difference to the comrades Levine. They loved — then laughed and parted.

WAYNE

Laughed!

(Sardonically.)

When she bade him good-by, he smashed her nose and blacked both eyes. She put him on Blackwell's Island. But don't worry! When he comes out, she'll go back to him. The new marriage! Our ideas of marriage change from age to age; but the reality is always the same. Free love! Since Noah and the Ark, men and women have talked of it and tried it. We still go in couples.

CLORA

You mean that for women the reality is a black eye!

WAYNE

In one way or another it comes to that — when they are faithless.

(He turns to go.)

CLORA

(Half to herself.)

I *have* the black eye. But you — you are harder than you say *that man* . . .

(Wayne pauses, seeing Sally as she enters.)

SALLY

Oh, Clora, the *worst*!

(Seeing Wayne.)

Tony — the light! It is to the south!

(Disconsolate, she throws herself into his arms.)

WAYNE

(Bravely.)

Don't take it hard, Sally-sis. I've known it was coming.

(*Very tenderly.*)

Cheer up, little sister. The nicest thing in the world is to have *you* care!

CLORA

(*With latent jealousy.*)

I care too, Tony. I do, I *do*!

(*Sally looks from one to the other, and steals away, round the corner.*)

WAYNE

(*Gazing fixedly at Clora.*)

You — care!

CLORA

(*With deep emotion.*)

Yes *I*! Oh, I *do* care! Believe me! That is why I am — am not going. I have brought harm to every one — to Sally, even to *him* — as I brought harm to you. Your whole strength was tested — your whole life at stake. At least I might have given you comfort and rest. But I betrayed you. In my selfishness, my vanity, I betrayed you — *I*! Tell me — you are unhappy alone?

WAYNE

I am alone, but not unhappy. The future is still mine! Those people down there — do you know when I found my interest in them? When I first felt the sin, the futility of our love, yours and mine — of our whole life! The seed of the age to come is theirs. I may still help to prepare the land for them — to prepare them for this land that once was ours.

CLORA

Yes. The future is yours! But you are harder, more cruel than that man on Blackwell's Island. Let me stand by you, and I will give you peace and strength, for years — forever! — until you have won the victory that to-night I have cost you. I will be nothing to you; or, God willing, I will be everything you have ever wished — your wife . . .

(With deep humility.)

My husband!

WAYNE

(Bitterly: mocking.)

Husband! I seem to remember that word! I shall be *husband* no more. I know you as you are! The

gracious American girl — all our lives we 've been taught we 're unworthy of her. She is the heroine of the ten-cent magazine, the artistic triumph of the yellow printing-press, the ideal of school-girls and the envy of shop-girls. She is as deep in vanity and waste as she is shallow of heart. She is hand in glove with all men — the mate of no man. Go, be the mistress of nobility. You are fit for it!

(With intense scorn.)

Husband!

CLORA

(In utmost sincerity.)

Perhaps I am what you say. Yet, I'll tell you a secret, Tony — a secret against my sex. We pretend to ourselves we are above such things — the things for which we were made. Oh, we pretend very well! But a woman is — a woman. I never knew one of us but deep down in her heart she was mortally ashamed to be childless.

(Not heeding her, Wayne walks vigorously to the door.)

(She reaches her hands toward him and pleads with fervor and deep abasement.)

Tony! I am not accustomed to plead, yet I beg you

— remember! By the girl I once was; by the love you once gave me — though I am not worthy of it — remember!

(Exit Wayne.)

(Clora stands dazed a moment. Then enter Sally.)

SALLY

Tony has left you — in anger!

CLORA

(Nods absently.)

Yes.

SALLY

Then you have *not* sent *him* away — Lord Iffley.

CLORA

(Smiling very sadly.)

He had told you — already? I *have* sent him away. I know — you said it! I have made him desperately unhappy. But he is young, and a man. In the end he will find some true woman.

SALLY

But with Tony — *must* it be all over?

CLORA

Why not? I used to think I loved him — more than he loved me. I had only a few odd sentiments — weak sentimentalities. I see it — now! To be *in* love — it is such a little thing. To *love* — ah, that is something! *His* life is a passion, an ideal. For me there is no place in it.

(Crying out in bitter self-mockery.)

Ruin his life? Everything I have made him suffer has raised him *above* himself! Ruin any true man? It is *I* who am blackened, corrupted.

SALLY

Not yet, dear . . .

CLORA

Not before the world. I could stand that. But in my own heart. Oh, sister, what an awakening! The things I have lived for — they are not what I care for. Deep down in my heart I want . . .

(She pauses as if searching her heart.)

SALLY

Tony; you want Tony. Oh! I forgot!

CLORA

Tony, yes! But more than that!

(She pauses, gazing blankly into space. Sally slips quietly out at the door. Clora does not see that she has gone.)

For once in my life I see my *whole* heart! . . .

(Turning slightly away from where Sally has been.)

Don't look at me, Sally-sis! Yet listen. I *must* say it! . . . All my life I have feared one thing — the *only* thing I have felt to be greater and stronger than I — children! I know I'm absurd; but don't laugh at me! If you laughed, I could n't *bear* it. Children — the Children of Heaven . . . they have threatened to conquer my life, to make me their slave . . . their *willing* slave! Soft little hands have reached out to me, Sally. Out of the mighty past they have reached to me — *through* me to the mightier future! To them my happiness has been nothing — no more than a flower which is withered and blown to the winds, that the autumn may bring harvest. I have feared them, I have *hated* them — wishing to live an eternal spring. I have scorned them and scoffed them, Sally, till you have thought me hard and hateful.

But it was only because in my deepest heart I loved them —loved them beyond all the world! In day dreams little rosy fingers have brushed my cheek; little golden heads have lain against my bosom. At night, in my deepest dreams, longing eyes have rebuked me. They have pleaded, oh, so sadly pleaded, for life and love! And they have *pursued* me, the Children of Heaven! They have pursued me like bloodhounds, day and night, without mercy . . . to destroy. But their hunger is the hunger of eternal love. To-night —

(A pause)

I am free for the first time —free of the lifelong fear of them. And for the first time I am wretched. Oh, I know now how those people feel who take their life in their hands and end it. . . .

(Her head sinks on her hands, crossed on the table.)

SALLY

(Without.)

Thank heaven you had n't gone! The light! The light! It may have been all a mistake!

(Reëntering.)

Bless that poky elevator! The light to the south

is out. At the Garden there has been *no* light.
Clora, stir yourself!

(Clora does not move.)

(Reënter Wayne ; he sees that the Garden tower is still dark.)

WAYNE

(To Sally.)

Those fellows over there are my good friends.
They won't own we're beaten — not *this* week.

(Sally goes to the corner and looks toward the tower of the Times. From the Garden tower a flashlight streams northward.)

SALLY

(Rushing to the parapet.)

Tony, look! North! North!

(She disappears around the corner.)

(Clora arouses herself and faces the tower.)

WAYNE

(Weary and incredulous.)

They ought n't — they have no right to do that sort of thing.

(Reënter Sally.)

SALLY

Look! Here!

(Pointing toward the Times.)

There seems to be a light on the far side of the tower — north!

(She disappears around the corner and after her Wayne. Mechanically Clara follows.)

(While the stage is empty, a low roar is heard below in the direction of Madison Square. It takes form in concerted shouting and cheering: "Wayne, Wayne, Wayne!" On the tower the letters blaze forth in electric light: Wayne!)

(Wayne enters hurriedly and looks over the parapet. Then he comes forward, throws himself in a chair beside the table and covers his face with his hands, his shoulders heaving. Clara enters behind. Not seeing her, Wayne rises to his full height, his face ecstatic.)

WAYNE

(Fervently.)

I am alone; but what is left of my life I give to my people — to all true sons of America!

(Pause. The cheering swells again: "Wayne, Wayne, Wayne!") It is as if the whole city in one tumultu-

ous roar were acclaiming him. Wayne, deeply moved, and with a gesture almost grotesque.)

Thank God there are those in this land to whom I'm not *husband*!

CLORA

(Tenderly, maternally.)

Tony! Oh, Tony, you great boy baby! You infant absurdity!

(With a sad dawning of her old sense of humor, she half mimics his gesture.)

No one wants you to be husband, Tony — not to eighty million Americans! Only to me, Tony. Be any sort of a husband, the worst! Just to me!

(Tenderly.)

My husband!

(Enter Muriel and Philip with tin horns and watchmen's rattles. Philip grabs Wayne by the hand. Muriel throws herself upon his breast.)

WAYNE

(Embracing her warmly.)

Is n't it great to be elected!

PHILIP

(Puts his arm about Clara and kisses her.)

Gee! Ain't it *great* to be crazy!

(Reaching into Philip's pockets, Muriel throws handfuls of confetti over Wayne. Philip toots in his ears. Mrs. Jones grasps a tickler and sweeps his nose. Meanwhile Sally has come round the corner and Clara has joined her, leading her down stage.)

CLORA

(In a lowered voice.)

Edmund?

SALLY

His eyes were full of tears. So I left him.

CLORA

Help him, do! You understand him?

SALLY

He's *precisely* like Alfonso!

(Sally disappears round the corner.)

(Mrs. Jones, Muriel and Philip are in animated talk near the door. Wayne rejoins Clara near the table.)

WAYNE

(Looking at her squarely.)

Why have you on this old coat — these violets?

CLORA

Violets!

(She snatches them and throws them on the ground.)

That's the end of them!

WAYNE

(Softening.)

And the coat! It was for me you put them on to-night! You *do* remember — their mingled perfume! You remembered our first love, up here with the stars — together!

(He picks up the violets, his face tender with emotion.)

CLORA

No, stupid, hush! It was n't that. I don't *want* you to be *in* love! Just love me.

(Snatching the violets, she throws them vigorously over the parapet.)

That's the end of violets! There's nothing in 'em.
Perfume!

*(From a distance she holds forward the lapel of her coat
towards his nose.)*

Smell!

(Mrs. Jones, beholding them, approaches smiling.)

Moth-balls, Tony.

(With mounting excitement.)

No violets for Clara! Moth-balls and matrimony.

(A grimace.)

Love's young dream is o'er!

MRS. JONES

(Takes each by the hand, but speaks to Clara.)

When husband and wife quarrel, it is always the
fault of the wife.

WAYNE

(Smiling.)

How about it, Kate the Curst?

(Clara instinctively bristles.)

MRS. JONES

(Taking alarm at Clora, speaks to Wayne.)

But when they 've made up — it was the husband's fault.

WAYNE

My fault — mine! From to-night I shall have no ambition that stands between me and your love.

(A silence. Louder cheering is heard below. A column of men is marching up the avenue in lock-step shouting, " Wayne, Wayne, Wayne ! ")

They are going to the house to congratulate me !

(Instinctively turning away from Clora, he looks at his watch. Seeing the watch, Mrs. Jones makes a face of serio-comic despair.)

The reporters will want to talk to me.

(Realizing what he has done, he sheepishly tries to get his watch back in his pocket unobserved.)

But they can wait.

(He holds out both hands to her.)

This evening shall be ours alone !

MRS. JONES

Bravo, Tony!

CLORA

(Grasping him by the shoulder, takes out the watch.)

No, Tony. Not a moment! Come! I'm your wife.

(In her old bossing manner.)

We'll go home to the reporters together. You are tired to death. Your throat needs spraying.

(She opens his mouth and looks into it.)

You'll not do a thing till you've slept twelve hours.

(She takes his arm and leads him firmly toward the door.)

What luck, dear heart, that that poky elevator was . . . poky!

WAYNE

I had n't rung for it.

(Boyishly confidential.)

I was coming back to you when Sally called.

CLORA

And it's true? You can take me — shamed as I am . . .

WAYNE

Sweetheart, I *love* you !

CLORA

I have *cause* to love you. Yes, as never before !

(Wayne takes her forcibly in his arms. She still turns a shameful face from him.)

(Philip and Muriel — who have tactfully stood apart till now — renew the attack and pursue them out at the door, amid showers of confetti.)

(As they go out, Iffley enters and looks sadly and silently after them. Sally follows sympathetically, and stands with her hand against the corner of the cottage. Iffley takes out the black-bordered handkerchief and blows his nose. In Sally's face, a queer little smile breaks the sadness.)

(As the curtain descends, the sound of marching column is heard in the distance : "Wayne, Wayne, Wayne !")

(Wayne's name on the tower winks on and off in time to the shouting.)

THE END



THE FORBIDDEN GUESTS

A Tragedy in One Act

PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

REAL

THE WOMAN

THE NURSE

THE DOCTOR

IMAGINED

THE SON

THE DAUGHTER

THE FATHER

TIME : TO-DAY

SCENE : — *The library and sitting-room of a city house, rich but simple. The ceiling is supported by heavy timbers, resting on carved corbels. The walls and windows are hung with crimson brocade.*

The rear wall ranges diagonally with the front of the stage. In the centre of it are two windows, overlooking the street, the curtains of which are closed. In the side wall, left, is an English Renaissance fireplace, the pyramidal hood supported by two sculptured figures, a youth and a maiden, both in classical draperies. A wood fire is burning to embers. Below the fireplace is a white marble pedestal upholding the portrait bust of a man in the early prime of life, the head large and firmly poised upon broad, athletic shoulders ; the face clean shaven, with features clear-cut, sensitive, and handsome. Facing the fireplace diagonally from above is a chaise-longue with pillows, and beside it, against the wall, is a carved chair of stiff, mediæval design. There is a door down left below the portrait, and down right a drawing-room table, dimly lighted by a lamp.

In the easy chair is a woman in the late thirties, of a sensitive, psychic cast, but with still the freshness and beauty of youth, suggesting the maiden

rather than the matron. She is in deepest mourning, simple and severe. The light from the fire, rich and soft, shines upon her face.

In the chair beside her is a nurse in cap and apron. She is in deep shadow, and at first is scarcely discernible.

Before the rise of the curtain, and for some time after it, the Beethoven Funeral March is heard, as if from the hall without.

As the curtain rises, the woman is lying back in the chair with her head supine, her eyes closed, and her features expressionless and set.

Then, with a start, her eyes open, as if she were returning to consciousness, and she sits upright, clasping the arms of the chair.

THE WOMAN

Have I been asleep? Oh, how could I! *How* could you let me?

THE NURSE

(Rising out of the gloom and gliding to the chair.)

Not asleep. Dazed for a moment, perhaps. But you needed rest. You have suffered so much.

THE WOMAN

But he has gone, and I did n't know it!

(Her features contract to an expression of pain, simple and large as that of a classical masque.)

You promised if I stayed here, you would tell me . . .

THE NURSE

Courage a moment, and listen! There! They are going.

(A slow, weighted tread, half walk, half shuffle, is heard as if from a marble entrance-hall below.)

THE WOMAN

(Speaking softly, into vacancy.)

Your friends are with you, dear heart—*our* friends! At least you have a comrade's farewell!

(A pause; then, from the street, the click of opening glass doors. The Woman's expression becomes tense. A louder click is heard as the doors are closed.)

THE WOMAN

(With a low, involuntary cry, rises, and gliding to the window, throws back the curtains. A flood of sunlight enters, from a snow-white, winter street. She covers her eyes with her fingers, and cries:)

Good-by, my sweetheart, forever good-by!

THE NURSE

(Gliding quickly after her, closes the curtains and, supporting her in her arms, leads her back to the chair.)

Believe me : I know ! It is better not !

(She begins to stroke her forehead, soothingly ; then suddenly, in a professional manner, feels of cheek and forearm.)

THE WOMAN

(Catching her hand.)

All the long months he was sick, you were so good to him ! I have come to think of you almost as a third in our family.

(The Nurse, shifting her grasp, presses her fingers upon the patient's inner wrist, and pauses, while she notes the pulse.)

THE WOMAN

(Unconscious of this, speaks excitedly, hectically.)

Do you remember how delirious he was, at first, under the shock of the fever ? How he talked to my portrait on the wall — what dreadful things he said to it, for not taking care of him — so gravely, so reasonably ! He never noticed me at the bed-

side, never knew the little I was able to do for him — and he had always been so clear-headed, so kind. I pretended to laugh at it, but it hurt me. In all the years we were married, he had never found fault with me!

THE NURSE

(Still in her professional manner, releasing the wrist.)

I understand. Now you must be still.

THE WOMAN

I have been still so long. And when I am still, I am thinking — thinking! If I *can* talk, is n't it better?

THE NURSE

(Smiling lightly, as she shakes down a clinical thermometer.)

This is one way to make folks quiet.

(She places it beneath the Woman's tongue. The Woman, with the tube held tight between her lips, smiles wryly at the Nurse. The Nurse slips behind her and out of the door, and is heard in the hall, calling for a number at the telephone. Presently she returns,

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takes the thermometer, reads the record with an averted look of dismay, and says:)

I have some things to do for a moment. Perhaps I had better leave you.

THE WOMAN

(With a little moan.)

Oh, I *can't* be left — alone. Not yet ! Did you hear what they said — the people in black — as we came in through the hall ?

(The Nurse nods absently.)

They said, "It is harder, so much harder for her. A woman who has children is never quite alone." I am alone — I have no children. But how — oh, *how* could they say that !

THE NURSE

(Grave, yet matter-of-fact.)

You *must* be quiet. The Doctor will be here by and by.

THE WOMAN

(With a start.)

You mean I have taken the fever — his fever ?

THE NURSE

(*With assumed confidence.*)

No. It is only that you are worn out. You were always careful.

THE WOMAN

But toward the end, when all hope was gone, I didn't do the things you told me. I didn't care. And I *don't* care. I can't live out my life — alone!

(*The Nurse places a light silk pillow behind her head, as she is speaking, loosens her bodice, and shakes out the masses of her hair.*)

THE WOMAN

I told you he never found fault with me. But there was one thing about which he was *so* much worse. Do you think it's wrong — there are no children? I had an excuse. Oh, I *did* have an excuse! It was my work. From a child I had loved it. Perhaps you don't understand what fun it is to make beautiful things that are all your own? My master — and he was one of the greatest living sculptors — said I had talent, and took me, a mere girl, as

his pupil! Then *he* wanted to marry me, and I said *no* — until . . .

(Her voice chokes, and she smiles in pain)

until he promised there should be no children to come between me and my work.

(The telephone rings, and the Nurse slips into the hall.)

Nurse ! Where are you ?

THE NURSE

(Speaking without, from the telephone.)

I 'm listening ! I know — you don't need to tell *me* — that you were happy.

(She pauses, and when the Woman speaks again, goes on talking in a low voice without. Scattered words are heard. "She is worn out." "Her heart is none too strong," etc.)

THE WOMAN

At first we were happy. And when you *are* happy, you are so much happier than ever you could have imagined ! Then I began to notice things — he was so strangely interested in all our friends' children. And when I was there, he sometimes looked at me *so* thoughtfully ! I like children, too, but he

always seemed to be saying to himself that I did n't, that I could n't — that I was something a woman ought not to be. You don't have to have children, do you, in order to like them? And don't you think every one has a right to be what he cares for, what he *is*? I could n't help it, that other things were more important. He never reproached me — never even said a word! But that only made it worse. It was as if he *could n't* tell me what he thought of me. That seemed disloyal. It hurt me beyond bearing. But he said, so tenderly, that he had n't meant it so, and reminded me that he had given his promise. His promise! Between those who love there is no such thing as a promise.

(She pauses and listens.)

(The Nurse is still speaking at the telephone. "Yes; this morning. At once, if you can," etc.)

THE WOMAN

Can you hear me? My pulse beats so loud in my temples! There is n't another soul in the world I could tell this to, and be sure she'd understand. You saw him — as he *was*!

(Her voice catches, and she is silent.)

(The Nurse reënters and stands irresolute behind the chair.)

THE WOMAN

(Her feverish impulse prevailing.)

The figures beside the fireplace, there — do you think them pretty? You see the idea? The boy is Youth, and the girl is Love! — strength and affection guarding the fires of home. People have said it is n't bad. But I don't care for it any more — nor for any of my work. It all seems — you understand what I mean! — so much like the work of a woman. Except *his* portrait over there. That is the one thing I have done worth while. It is strong — alive. It is the dear lad himself — quiet, intelligent, brave. The eyes — do you think they are sad? Some of his friends said they were. But I must have seen that look in them, or why should I put it there?

(She pauses, as if groping with a new idea; then speaks in sudden surprise and pain.)

Do you think he looks at me so sadly because there is one great thing in which I failed? It *must* be. That is it! If I had only known. Perhaps, in my heart, I did know! I tried to justify myself.

My work — ! I soon found that, compared to *him*, I had never really cared for it. Then I told myself that the duty toward children — even the love of them — would make me less to him. So often I have seen just that happen — and with people who are fondest of each other. Children come between them and make them — different from what they were. The love of their youth — their first, best love ! — fades and is gone. I was jealous of the mere idea of them. You think it strange. But I was — jealous ! And then — I might have died. Oh, do you suppose he thought me only selfish — afraid ?

THE NURSE

(With resolution.)

Come, dear — to bed.

THE WOMAN

I'm not as ill as that. Only my head aches. To bed ! I can't. Oh, I can't go there now, ever — ever !

(With gentle strength, the Nurse tries to raise her and lead her to the door. She resists convulsively, and shrinks back into the chair.)

THE WOMAN

Not yet ! Not till he too is at rest !

THE NURSE

(Wrinkling her forehead professionally.)

The Doctor will be here in a moment. We shall do what he says.

(She takes her post behind the chair.)

THE WOMAN

(Her fevered strain gradually heightening.)

Instead of showing me how wrong I was, he made fun of me. When I questioned him, he said it would be less trouble to have a child and then forget it, as other people did. If he had thought me so dreadfully wrong, he *could n't* have spoken like that? But it weighed on my mind, and I kept questioning him. He made a joke of pretending it had already been born — *you* know how full he was of make-believe and nonsense ! Whenever I spoke of it, he asked about its clothes. He said they might be cut on the bias, but it would be dangerous if they were gored.

(She laughs, a little hysterically, and the Nurse shows alarm.)

THE WOMAN

I gave the baby *his* name: not the name I called him by — his real name. By and by he said he wished James were a girl. For three years, he said, he had liked girls best. We had only been married three years. So I invented a girl, and we called her my name — my real name, you know, Elizabeth! That was sixteen years ago. We used to talk about their toys, their frocks; of sending them to school and college — all that! You must have noticed what fun he was to talk to — how alive and vivid he made even nonsense seem. The children were almost as real as if they *had* been born.

(She is silent a moment, a smile breaking through the hectic flush on her face. Then she cries out:)

Do you suppose they are *dead*? They were born in his heart, and lived there. Did they die too? Am I *all* alone?

(Her body sinks to her knees with a moan, her forehead resting on her outstretched wrists.)

(In the shadowy corner by the mantel, standing close beside the sculptured figure of Youth, appears the white form of a boy, who closely resembles it. Timidly, it floats forward and lays one hand in hers.)

THE WOMAN

(With a convulsive shudder, she speaks as though with an effort of will, her face still hidden between her wrists.)

You are cold, Nurse. How small your hands are!

THE SON

(In a voice which, though youthful, is strange, unworldly and sad.)

It is not the Nurse.

(He shrinks back into the shadow of the mantel, yet still holds a pale hand out to her.)

THE WOMAN

(Looks up aghast, and then, in an awed whisper.)

Is it *you*!

THE SON

Yes! It is I!

THE WOMAN

(Shrinking, and crying out in alarm.)

No! No! It is *not* you! Only my fever makes me

think I see you. Go away, please. Do go away!
It can't be you. You have never been born!

(She turns to the Nurse, her eyes wild and beseeching.)

You don't see anything — there!

THE NURSE

No, dear. There is nothing. Look again. It has gone!

THE SON

(Standing forth resolutely from the shadow, so that he is seen clearly in every line.)

It is I! I who have never been born!

(On the other side of the mantel, close beside the figure of Love, a girl appears, draped like the sculpture, though with curious little alterations that give the gown a modern look.)

THE DAUGHTER

And I! Our father — where is he?

THE SON

(Stern, almost accusing.)

Where is our father?

THE WOMAN

Your father?

(Sobbing.)

He is dead!

(The children cry out, in a little wail of anguish.)

THE WOMAN

You loved him?

(She sobs, and then, with a strange, sudden smile, almost happy in the thought.)

You loved him, too?

THE NURSE

(Shaking her gently by the shoulder, and again trying to lead her away.)

My dear, be comforted. Come! It is nothing. Only your own imagination!

THE WOMAN

(Resisting with convulsive vigor.)

They are *his* children. They have come to comfort me — to be with me, now and always!

(Her voice rises, as if in joy.)

They loved him, too!

THE SON

(Looking toward the daughter.)

No! We did n't love him.

(Sadly the girl shakes her head.)

(The Nurse, taking her stand behind the chair, places a hand on the Woman's shoulder, and waits, looking out of the door anxiously, from time to time, for the Doctor.)

THE WOMAN

(Grieved, yet uncomprehending.)

You did n't love him? You hated him?

THE SON

Don't you understand? We can't either love or hate. All we can do is to *want* him, and want you.

THE DAUGHTER

(Lamenting.)

How we wanted you!

THE SON

But we've never been born. And now — now we never can be. Oh, *Mother!*

THE WOMAN

(Startled by the word.)

Yes! I *am* your mother!

THE SON

(Almost sternly.)

Why could n't we be . . . ?

THE WOMAN

(With the excuse of self-accusation.)

I had my work to do.

(With a slow glance, she indicates the marbles of the mantel, and then the portrait beyond.)

THE SON

(Looks at them, uncomprehending, disdainful.)

Are *they* why you could n't . . . What good are they?

THE WOMAN

(Without conviction, yet hurt.)

They were *meant* to be beautiful.

THE SON

Can they walk? Can they run?

THE WOMAN

(Puzzled.)

No.

THE DAUGHTER

Are they warm?

THE WOMAN

No, dear!

(She smiles with maternal indulgence.)

THE SON

(Conclusively.)

Then they are like us. They have never been born.

THE DAUGHTER

(Coming forth eagerly, as she speaks, from the shadow.)

If they only had been, they might have been *very* beautiful! How beautiful father was! And you

know, even though I have n't been born, I look like him !

(Abashed at what she has said, she catches her face in her hands, and shrinks back into the shadow.)

THE SON

Even we are better than they are ! *We* can move about. Sometimes I pretend I can walk — and run ! I almost feel as if I could ! Do you remember, mother, when you saw the football clothes in the shop-window, and thought of getting them for me ?

THE WOMAN

Yes, yes ! I remember. Would you like to play football — you ?

THE SON

(Proudly.)

Father played. I might have played too ! At least you would have told me all about him. You used to talk *of* us, but you never thought, either of you, of talking *to* us ! He might have told us stories ! — About the run he made ; how he plunged through the centre, threw off the backs, and ran

fifty yards down the field to goal. At the great games, they still speak of it. When he struck the line, he tore a great hole in the centre of it. I'm big as he was at my age, but I can't do it. When I strike the line, I go through it, as he did. Only nobody knows it.

(The Woman leans forward with a smile, but when she makes as if to speak, she is dumb, and the smile freezes on her lips.)

THE SON

(Eagerly.)

And then there was the war. Father used to be in the Squadron; and once, when you saw it marching to the train, you wondered how you would feel if I were going with them. I *was* there! I marched all the way! That is —

(With the manner of scrupulous truth)

I *went* with them. And I did all I could to help them. But it was nothing. I could n't march. I could n't fight. If I could even have died, it would n't matter so much that I've never been born.

(The Woman makes as if to cry out; but no sound comes, and her smile changes to a contortion, almost a grin, of pain.)

THE DAUGHTER

(Who has come diffidently forward while the son was speaking.)

And there was the doll at the bazaar. I might have loved it so hard. It's name was Jemimah.

THE WOMAN

(A cry, almost of happiness, breaking from her.)

I remember it. I remember! It looked as if its name was Jemimah!

THE DAUGHTER

And then the gowns — such pretty gowns you've imagined for me.

(Her shyness vanishes. She comes forward, stoops, and taking her draperies in her fingers, holds them dubiously forth.)

Do you think *this* looks like a party gown? I'd rather have it a riding-habit. I should have liked horses better than dancing. But you know it had to be white.

THE WOMAN

(With affectionate simulation.)

It's as lovely a party gown as ever I saw!

THE DAUGHTER

(Still dubious.)

I was afraid it might still look as if it were only to sleep in — in the grave.

(Her face slowly lighting with happiness.)

Is it really a party gown?

(She smiles joyously, and floats quite out to her mother's knee.)

THE WOMAN

My daughter! Oh, my daughter!

(She clutches the slender figure in her arms.)

How soft you are, and cool — restful, comforting! There never was anything half so sweet.

THE DAUGHTER

(Whispering eagerly into her ear.)

And you don't think my gown would seem strange to Mr. Rowland Blake? It is n't *such* a queer gown?

THE WOMAN

(Mystified.)

Mr. Rowland Blake?

THE DAUGHTER

His father, you know, is one of the men who just now took away our father.

THE WOMAN

You mean Roley!

THE DAUGHTER

I should n't dare call him that. But if I had been born, he would have let me love him. I was meant to be his. That is why he has always been so shy—and does such dreadful things. You must n't blame him. He has no mother, you know—and not even me to love him. Often I am with him. But he can't see. Do you think I might ask him not to be bad—for me? Are you sure he would n't think this *such* a queer gown?

(The Woman lays her face on her daughter's neck, and sobs freely, with abundant tears.)

THE SON

(Coming forward also, and holding her hand.)

It's the same with me. I should have loved Jack.

THE WOMAN

(Again mystified.)

Jack?

THE SON

Jacqueline Convers! Her father, too, has gone with ours. She was meant for me. But I had to stand by and let her marry Pinkering. Of all the fellows—think of it—Pinkering! I tried so hard to tell her she was mine. But I could n't! And already, when she is alone—except that I am there—she sobs all day, just as you are sobbing. And now it's too late for me ever . . .

THE WOMAN

Oh, my son! My daughter!

THE SON

Often we hoped—when father whispered to you—held you so warm in his arms . . .

THE WOMAN

(Releasing them, and covering her ears with her palms.)

Don't, don't! You don't know what you are saying! But it is true. Yes! Even as I loved him, I

hated you, was jealous of you — of our children whom the world needs so much, who have so much need of the world! Always he knew that. And always it came between our love!

(She starts forward, gazing in contrition at the sculptured portrait.)

(The children shrink back from her.)

(As she gazes, the form of her husband appears, standing close beside the portrait, and like it, looks at her gravely, austerely.)

THE WOMAN

Jeemie, ah, sweetheart! Don't look at me so!

THE FATHER

(Turns from her, and reaches out his hands to the children, his face still grave, yet lighting with inward happiness.)

You can come to me now — at last!

THE WOMAN

Me, sweetheart! Oh, come to me! Don't turn against me now! Be good to me! If you can't love me any more, just be good to me.

THE FATHER

(Not heeding her.)

My son! My daughter!

THE DAUGHTER

(Lowers her eyes.)

No! Not now!

THE SON

(Shakes his head, and half lifts a forbidding palm.)

You *should* have been our father!

THE FATHER

(Surprised, yet pleading tenderly.)

'Lis'beth!

THE WOMAN

No, no! That is *my* name!

(Freezing.)

Her name is Elizabeth.

THE FATHER

(Still unheeding, turns, pleading to the son.)

Jeemie — come!

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THE WOMAN

(With a cry of pain.)

You, *you* are Jeemie, *my* Jeemie, *my* sweetheart,
my comrade! Oh, come to me! Comfort me!

(An outburst of jealousy.)

They? They are nothing! *They have never been
born!*

*(The Father bends his eyes on her, stern and accusing,
but says nothing.)*

THE WOMAN

*(In a sudden revulsion, an access of contrition, slips
from the Nurse, throws herself forward, and kneels
on the floor.)*

Forgive me — oh, forgive me! I won't be jealous
any more. Give them our own dear names — give
them everything. Give them all our love! Yet —
be good to me. If you will only be kind!

*(The Father remains immovable. She turns to the
children.)*

My son, my daughter! Go to him! Love him!
You don't understand. It was *my* fault — all mine!
But don't, don't make him hate me!

(The Nurse has come forward and now sits on the foot of the chair, and holds her firmly, a hand on each shoulder.)

THE WOMAN

(A smile spreading upon her hectic cheeks, at once tender and full of guile.)

The stories, you remember, my son, about football, and the things that happened in the Squadron! He will tell you! Once he was shot by a striker, and then they met in the hospital, and became friends! It is *such* an amusing story, and so dear!

THE FATHER

(Moving toward his son.)

Come to me, lad.

THE SON

(Shrinking from him.)

That was when you were among the living. Now you are only a ghost, like us. And *you* were born!

THE WOMAN

(In her struggle against her pain, the look of inward guile has grown deeper. She turns to her daughter.)

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He and Roley were the *dearest* friends! He can tell you all about him. You were made to be comrades, you and your father! He loves you so . . .

(She struggles a moment against jealousy, and then, conquering)

so that I give him to you. Love him! Be good to him — even if you take him away from me!

THE DAUGHTER

(Wistfully.)

It might have been.

THE SON

(With an air of forbidding dignity.)

But now he is dead.

THE DAUGHTER

(Disconsolate.)

And we . . . we can . . . never . . .

(The children float back into the shadows of the mantel.)

THE SON

(Sadly.)

Never . . . never . . . for all time.

THE DAUGHTER

(With a little wail.)

Forever . . . forever . . .

THE SON

Always, to eternity . . .

(They disappear, but can still be heard, repeating the words "Never . . . forever" ; their voices, now waxing, now waning, become distant.)

THE CHILDREN

(With a last shrinking cry.)

Eternity is cold . . . Oh ! Cold !

(They are heard no more.)

THE FATHER

(No longer sad, only austere and accusing.)

You reproached them — *you !* — that they have never been born !

THE WOMAN

(In an agony.)

I *am* in sin — in shame ! But that is why I need

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you — need you as never before ! All your life you knew my sin ; yet you shielded me, forgetting your own dearest wish — shielded me from knowing it *was* sin. Help me now !

THE FATHER

Shielded you ! You knew it — always knew it. There was never a day, not an hour, that you did not fight with your heart to kill the sense of your shame.

THE WOMAN

Yes, yes. It is true ! But it was because I loved you so much. Our life — it was you who used to say it — was all beauty, all passion and tenderness. Oh, *how* can you torture me ?

THE FATHER

Yes ! You loved me — so much that you killed our love.

THE WOMAN

But it was you, dear, it was *you* I loved. Look !

(She points to the sculpture beside him.)

This is our child. I made it. In this you live for-

ever, forever young and beautiful—and I live with you!

THE FATHER

It was in this that you killed me, and killed yourself.

THE WOMAN

Oh, I *don't* understand!

THE FATHER

You never understood. You thought we loved—were happy. Our love was sterile, vain. You were a thief in happiness. You stole the flower of life, and blighted the fruit. Your country gave you its best—beauty, strength, love. You took it all, and gave your country no return. You have killed us both. You are dead forever, as I am.

THE WOMAN

(Crying out in agony.)

Dead! Oh, if I only *were*, I might go with you—love you still. I am alive, and all alone! Only be good to me! I know you don't love me—can't ever love me. Yet you were always kind. Look at me kindly, sweetheart—once, only once, before

you go. Give me one little word to take me down to the grave!

(The Father moves backward from her toward the marble image. His body gives forth a strange light, as if the effulgence of strength and purity, but his eyes are still austere, accusing.)

THE WOMAN

Your eyes, dear! Don't look at me so!

(The eyes do not change.)

Oh, where shall I go away from them? Your lips, my sweetheart! Your lips are still mine!

(With convulsive strength, she leaps from the grasp of the Nurse, and throws herself towards him. But in the instant the light vanishes, and he is gone. She embraces the marble.)

Your lips are cold. Stone cold — as they were in the coffin!

(She utters a cry of horror. Her knees give way, but she still clings to the sculptured portrait. It totters and falls. The marble shatters on the hearthstone.)

(The Nurse quickly kneels beside her.)

(The Doctor, who has just entered, stands horrified, then hastens forward.)

THE DOCTOR

She is delirious?

THE NURSE

(Stripping open her bodice.)

Quick! Her heart is failing.

THE DOCTOR

(Kneels and applies an instrument.)

She is dead.

(Both stand apart from the body in horror.)

*(The crash of the marble has broken apart the embers.
Their dying fires light up the form of the Woman,
lying amid fragments of the portrait.)*

THE END



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